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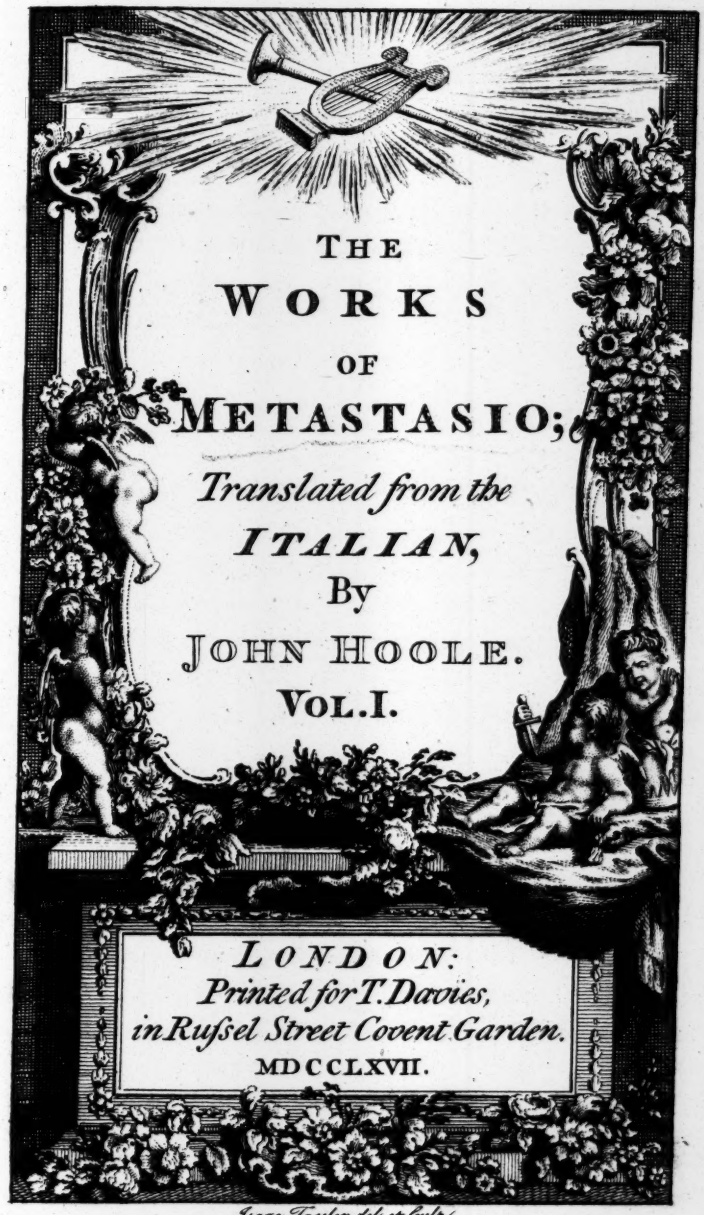

Isaac Taylor del. et sculp.

G.R.
III.
BRITANNIARUM

J. Hall Sculp.

TO THE

DUKE

OF

NORTHUMBERLAND, &c.

MY LORD,

THE fondneſs with which every man ſurveys the work that he has performed with labour, naturally diſpoſes him to hope that it may pleaſe

a them,

them, whoſe approbation is moſt to be deſired.

By preſenting this tranſlation to YOUR GRACE, I may incur the charge of having indulged too far the paſſions of a writer; nor ſhould I eaſily refute the accuſation, were not my vanity ſupported by greater merit than my own.

The poet, whoſe works I have endeavoured to interpret, has a natural right to the notice of the Great. He is diſtinguiſhed ſometimes by graceful familiarity, and ſometimes by eaſy magnificence; his mien is ſoft, though his ſentiments are ſublime. He mingles the wiſdom of the politician with the paſſion of his dialogues, and the precepts

of

of the moraliſt with the levity of his ſongs.

Of the juſtneſs of his civil reflections YOUR GRACE's own experience in great affairs will eaſily decide; and the purity of his moral maxims will in every good breaſt raiſe him a patron. His power of poetry is ſuch, if it be not diminiſhed by the inability of his tranſlator, as gives novelty to that truth which is already known, and charms to that virtue which is already loved.

Such are the Dramas for which I take the liberty of ſoliciting YOUR GRACE's protection; and ſuch is my veneration for YOUR GRACE's character, that nothing but what appeared worthy to engage

the moſt exalted mind, ſhould have been preſented to You by,

MY LORD,

YOUR GRACE'S

moſt obliged,

moſt obedient,

and moſt devoted ſervant,

JOHN HOOLE.

PREFACE.

TO thoſe who are already acquainted with Metaſtaſio it may appear unneceſſary to dwell much upon his character; but it cannot be deemed ſuperfluous for a tranſlator to explain, in ſome ſort, the merits of his author, ſince thoſe who can deſire, or want a verſion, may be ſuppoſed to have little knowledge of the original.

The name of Metaſtaſio is ſo generally known, and his reputation through Europe ſo well eſtabliſhed, that I cannot but think it ſtrange that he has never yet been introduced to the Engliſh reader. It may perhaps be alleged that one of his excellencies, which conſiſts in the purity and ſimplicity of his

ſtyle, would be, in a great meaſure, if not wholly, loſt by a tranſlation: and indeed, were this his only, or his chief praiſe, little could be ſaid to remove the objection: but ſurely he has beauties of a higher nature; and however difficult it may be to preſerve the graces of diction in a different language, yet an author who engages the attention by the dignity of his thoughts and the texture of his fable, may, even in a tranſlation, retain, in no inconſiderable degree, his native power of pleaſing.

Our poet's works are compoſed chiefly of ſerious dramas: the reſt are lyric poems, and pieces written upon various ſubjects: of all which ſcarce any are known to the Engliſh reader, but by the verſions annexed to ſuch of them, as furniſh part of our muſical entertainments.

But

But the dramas, as performed at our theatre, can, even in the Italian, give little idea of the genius of Metaſtaſio; for the principal end of the conductor of the opera being to exhibit the ſinger and muſician, no regard is paid to the diſpoſition of the fable: and ſo licentiouſly are alterations made, that perſonages are frequently omitted, and the ſpeeches of one are put into the mouth of another, to the entire ſubverſion of that propriety of ſentiment, and diſtinction of character, which this writer has been eminently careful to obſerve: and as the nature of our muſical entertainments would, by no means, admit of the length of his recitative, his ſcenes are ſo abridged, that not only the dialogue is mutilated, but the action is often precipitated, the cataſtrophe unnaturally brought on, and the whole rendered cold and unaffecting; and that wonderful art utterly

utterly deſtroyed by which the poet conducts his plot, carries on his action by juſt gradations, excites the hopes and fears of his audience, and keeps up the attention to the laſt ſcene.

The real excellencies of Metaſtaſio muſt be therefore ſought for in the cloſet, by the peruſal of his works entire and uninjured; when it will appear that his dramatic pieces have all the merit of regular tragedies, allowing for ſome little incongruities, ariſing from the general plan of operas which he has been obliged to adopt.

I ſhall not here enter upon the invidious taſk of examining how far he is indebted to others: it muſt be owned that if he has many original beauties, ſome are likewiſe the offſpring of imitation. Yet let it be remembered

bered that wherever he has copied, he has copied like a true genius, and that the paſſages he has borrowed have generally received new graces from his pen.

It may not be improper to obſerve that the ſongs or airs being, in the Italian, principally written with a view to the muſic, were, it is preſumed, framed to ſuch meaſures as might moſt favour the compoſer: the difficulty of rendering theſe lyrics into our language has made it in a manner neceſſary to take more liberties here, than I have indulged myſelf with in any other part of the tranſlation.

Several of the dramas have, in the original, a kind of epilogue joined to them, which is indeed nothing more than a panegyric upon the Emperor or Empreſs: this being altogether local and temporary, and from its nature incapable

incapable of being made graceful in Engliſh, is left out in the preſent verſion.

I have alſo omitted to tranſlate the arguments prefixed to each opera, as they counteract the author's own deſign; who ſeems evidently to have exerted all his ſkill, by the intricacy of his plots, to keep the mind in pleaſing ſuſpenſe, till the whole is at laſt unexpectedly unravelled.

I ſhall only add that if the pleaſure I have experienced from a peruſal of Metaſtaſio has enabled me to transfuſe a ſmall portion of his ſpirit into the tranſlation, I may be led to hope that the following ſheets will not be found wholly unworthy of the public notice. I am perhaps more ready to flatter myſelf with ſucceſs in this undertaking, from the indulgence with which my verſion of Taſſo has

has been received; and I ſhall eſteem myſelf happy to have once more contributed to the national amuſements of my country, by introducing an author, whoſe writings are not more eminent for elegant poetry, than refined morality.

ARTAXERXES.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

ARTAXERXES, Prince, afterwards King of PERSIA, Friend of ARBACES, in love with SEMIRA.

MANDANE, Sister to ARTAXERXES, in love with ARBACES.

ARTABAN, Commander of the Royal Guards, Father of ARBACES and SEMIRA.

ARBACES, Friend of ARTAXERXES, in love with MANDANE.

SEMIRA, Sister to ARBACES, in love with ARTAXERXES.

MEGABISES, General of the Army, the Confident of ARTABAN.

The SCENE lies in the City of SUSA, the Residence of the Kings of PERSIA.

Isaac Taylor del. et sculpt.

ACT I. SCENE I.

An inner Garden belonging to the Royal Palace of the Kings of Perſia. A proſpect of the Palace. Time, Night: Moonlight.

MANDANE, ARBACES.

ARBACES.

FAREWELL!

MANDANE.

Arbaces, ſtay.

ARBACES.

Belov'd Mandane!
The dawn is near; ſhould Xerxes ever learn

That 'gainſt his harſh command I enter'd here,
It little would avail in my defence
To urge a lover's warmth; nor would the name
Of daughter plead for thee.

MANDANE.

The fear is juſt:
This regal dwelling muſt for thee be dang'rous.
But yet thou may'ſt remain in Suſa's walls;
Since exil'd from the palace, not the city:
Hope is not wholly loſt: thou know'ſt thy father
The mighty Artaban directs at will
The heart of Xerxes; that to him 'tis giv'n,
At ev'ry hour, to pierce the deep receſſes
Of this imperial manſion; that my brother
My Artaxerxes boaſts thee for his friend.
In virtue and in fame you grew together,
All Perſia has beheld you partners ſtill
In danger's deeds: each from the other caught
The emulative flame: the troops admire thee,
The people ev'n adore thee, and the kingdom
Expects its ſureſt ſafety from thy arm:
Amidſt ſuch friends how canſt thou fail ſupport?

ARBACES.

Alas! my love, we but deceive ourſelves:
Thy brother would in vain attempt to aid me:

He

e and my father are alike ſuſpected,
When they defend Arbaces: ev'ry plea
heard with ſlow belief, when warmly urg'd
y partial friendſhip, or paternal fondneſs:
nd for th' inconſtant herd of vulgar friends,
heſe ſhrink when once the monarch's favour fails.
low many that with awe but late beheld me,
ow look on me with ſcorn! Where then, Mandane,
Where would'ſt thou have me hope? My dwelling here
s danger to thyſelf, and pain to me.
o thee 'tis dang'rous, as it adds new matter
o feed ſuſpicion in the breaſt of Xerxes:
o me 'tis painful to be ever near thee,
et be deny'd to gaze upon thy beauties.
ince then my birth alone has made me guilty,
ll die, or merit thee—my life! farewell.

MANDANE.

nhuman, canſt thou leave me thus?

ARBACES.

Alas!
m not inhuman: Xerxes is the tyrant:
hy father is unjuſt.

MANDANE.

Yet ſome excuſe
Ev'n he might claim when he deny'd my hand:
Our rank, the world, the diſtance plac'd between us:
Who knows but all his anger was diſſembled?
Perhaps in ſecret he condemn'd his rigour?

ARBACES.

He might have yet refus'd to grant my ſuit
Without contempt: to drive me from him thus,
To treat me like the loweſt of the vulgar,
To ſtile me baſe, preſumptuous—ſuch reproach
I feel, Mandane, at my inmoſt heart.
What if my anceſtors ne'er wore the crown,
At leaſt they have defended it for his:
If in theſe veins there runs no royal blood,
By ſaving Artaxerxes I've preſerv'd
The blood of Perſia's kings: let Xerxes ſpeak
His own, not boaſt the merits of his race.
'Tis chance, not virtue to be nobly born:
Did choice direct our births, and only give
Kingdoms to thoſe who beſt could rule, perhaps
Arbaces had been Xerxes, Xerxes then
Had been Arbaces.

MANDANE.

In Mandane's preſence,
With more reſpect, Arbaces, name her father.

ARBACES.

ut when I ſuffer ſuch injurious treatment,
Vhen I'm deny'd t'indulge a blameleſs paſſion,
Tis ſurely little, if I but complain.

MANDANE.

orgive me: from thy anger I begin
o doubt thy truth: how ſhall I hope the heart
hat hates the father, can eſteem the daughter?

ARBACES.

his hatred proves my paſſion more, Mandane;
y indignation ſprings from love to thee;
ecauſe I fear, that, baniſh'd from thy ſight,
ne'er may ſee thee more; that this perhaps
s the laſt time--O Heav'n, thou weep'ſt!--forbear,
ry up thy tears, my love; too much I'm ſoften'd
Without thy grief—I here would have thee cruel—
ermit me to depart; now imitate
he ſternneſs of thy father. [*Going.*

MANDANE.

Stay, and hear me;
've not the heart to ſee thee leave me thus:
ain would I go——Farewell!

ARBACES.

Farewell, Mandane!

MANDANE.

Be true to love, recall to mind
Thou leav'ſt me here with woes oppreſt;
And let Mandane ſometimes find
Remembrance in thy faithful breaſt.
When thou art gone, tho', midſt my grief,
Theſe eyes no more thy image ſee:
Yet love, to give my pains relief,
Shall make my heart diſcourſe with thee.

SCENE II.

ARBACES, ARTABAN *with his ſword drawn and bloody.*

ARBACES.

O hard command! O fatal ſeparation!
O cruel moment that muſt thus divide me
From her for whom I breathe, while ſtill I'm left
To drag this wretched life.

ARTABAN.

My ſon——Arbaces.

ARBACES.

ARBACES.

My Lord!

ARTABAN.

Give me thy ſword.

ARBACES.

'Tis here, my lord.

ARTABAN.

There—take thou mine: fly; hide from ev'ry eye
That crimſon ſteel.

ARBACES.

O Gods! what hapleſs breaſt
Pour'd forth this blood?

ARTABAN.

Enquire not now, be gone;
All ſhall be ſoon reveal'd.

ARBACES.

O Sir! your looks,
All pale and wild, have fill'd me with affright:
I freeze with horror whilſt I hear your lips
Give painful utt'rance to your words—O ſpeak!
Tell me, what can this mean?

ARTABAN.

ARTABAN.

Thou art reveng'd;
Xerxes is dead, and by this hand.

ARBACES.

What ſay'ſt thou!—
What do I hear?—What is it thou haſt done?

ARTABAN.

My deareſt ſon, thy injuries were mine——
For thee I'm guilty.

ARBACES.

Ha! for me you're guilty!
There wanted only this t'increaſe my woes.
And what are now your hopes?

ARTABAN.

My mind revolves
A great deſign; thou may'ſt perhaps aſſume
The reins of ſov'reignty—depart—my purpoſe
Demands that I remain.

ARBACES.

My ſoul's diſtracted
In this dread interval!

AR-

ARTABAN.

Still doſt thou linger?

ARBACES.

O Heav'n!

ARTABAN.

Depart—no more---leave me in peace.

ARBACES.

What fatal day is this! undone Arbaces!

A thouſand woes my breaſt ſurprize;
I pant thro' ev'ry part:
Cold thro' my veins the current flies
To guard my trembling heart.
What anguiſh muſt this ſtroke of fate
My dear Mandane coſt!
How ſhall my ſoul lament too late
A father's virtue loſt!

SCENE III.

ARTABAN *alone.*

Be reſolute my thoughts! the firſt bold ſtep
Demands a ſecond: to withdraw the hand

When

When enter'd upon crimes, were to be guilty
Without the hopes t'enjoy the fruits of treaſon.
Drain then the royal blood its utmoſt drop,
Nor let the empty name of virtue ſhake me.
Whate'er we judge, ev'n daring guilt ſometimes
May claim applauſe: to combat with ourſelves;
To bear unmov'd the pangs of ſelf remorſe;
Amidſt ſurrounding objects of affright
To keep the courage fix'd; theſe, theſe are virtues
A glorious crime requires——but ſee, the prince:
Now to my wiles—What mean theſe ſudden cries!
What tumult's this!

SCENE IV.

ARTABAN, ARTAXERXES, MEGABISES, GUARDS.

ARTABAN.

Already riſen, Sir!
When ſcarce the day has dawn'd? What means this anger
Which mingles with the grief that clouds your brow?

ARTAXERXES.

O deareſt Artaban! moſt welcome to me:

Give

ive me thy counſel, give me aid, revenge;
ll, all I aſk from thy fidelity.

ARTABAN.

tremble, Prince, at this confus'd command:
eclare yourſelf more fully.

ARTAXERXES.

O ye pow'rs!
y father on his bed there murder'd lies!

ARTABAN.

ay, how!

ARTAXERXES.

I know not---'midſt the ſhade and ſilence
f this unhappy night, ſome villain wrought
he horrid deed.

ARTABAN.

Inſatiate luſt of empire!
hat piety, what holy bond of nature
an curb thy impious, thy ungovern'd rage!

ARTAXERXES.

underſtand thee, friend; my faithleſs brother,
arius is the guilty.

AR-

ARTABAN.

Who but he
By night could penetrate the royal palace?
Who elſe could find acceſs to Xerxes' bed?
His diſcontent, his turbulence of temper,
His eagerneſs to graſp his father's ſcepter——
Alas! my Lord! I tremble for your life:
For pity's ſake take heed---for oft one crime
Is as a ſtep that to another leads:
Revenge your father, and preſerve yourſelf.

ARTAXERXES.

O! if there's one amongſt you preſent here,
Who feels compaſſion for a murder'd king;
Who feels abhorrence of the crime, who calls
Himſelf my friend——now let him fly, to puniſh
The parricide, the traitor.

ARTABAN.

Guards, to you,
In Artaxerxes ſpeaks a prince, a ſon;
Or rather ſay in him your ſov'reign ſpeaks:
Obey his mandate, puniſh this offender,
I'll lead you forth and teach you where to ſtrike.
Now fortune favour my deſigns. [*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

Yet ſtay:

Hear me; revenge like this may more offend
My father than the crime: Is not Darius
The ſon of Xerxes?

ARTABAN.

O! 'twere impious now
To counſel mercy: he whoſe hand could ſhed
A parent's blood, has loſt the name of ſon.

On troubled Lethe's dreary coaſt,
Hark! a king and father's ghoſt
Calls for vengeance and repoſe!
His looks now chill my ſoul with fear;
And now his dreadful voice I hear:
See! in his breaſt, reveal'd to view,
That breaſt from whence your life you drew,
His gaping wound he ſhows!

SCENE V.

ARTAXERXES, MEGABISES.

ARTAXERXES.

What victim muſt I ſlay! O Megabiſes!

MEGABISES.

Remove your doubts: one ſtroke alone will puniſh
An impious murd'rer and ſecure your reign.

ARTAXERXES.

But to the world my juſtice may appear
A thirſt of empire——O this thought alone
Will blot the peace of all my future days!
No--no--it muſt not be: let me be gone
And call the ſentence back.

MEGABISES.

My lord! what doſt thou?
Now is the time t'avenge your private wrongs.
Learn to be cruel from your cruel brother,
He oft has taught it you.

ARTAXERXES.

Yet ought not I
To imitate his crimes: his frequent guilt
Acquits not mine. Is there a fault on earth
But what may plead example? None are guilty
If to produce example may ſuffice
To wipe away the ſtain.

MEGABISES.

But ſelf-defence
Is nature's law: unleſs you take his life
By him you muſt be ſlain.

ARTAXERXES.

O no——my danger

Shall find the favour of protecting Jove
To ſave me from a brother's impious rage.

SCENE VI.

ARTAXERXES, MEGABISES, SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

Prince, whither would'ſt thou go?

ARTAXERXES.

Farewell, Semira.

SEMIRA.

You fly me, Artaxerxes; ſtay and hear me.

ARTAXERXES.

Permit me to depart; detain me not.

SEMIRA.

Is this the welcome that thou giv'ſt to her,
Who ſighs but for thy love?

ARTAXERXES.

If I hear more,
Too much, Semira, I offend my duty.

SEMIRA.

Go then, ingrate! I plainly read thy ſcorn.

ARTAXERXES.

Forbear, dear idol of my love!
O call me not ingrate:
Enough, alas! I'm doom'd to prove
The frowns of angry fate.
Love knows my paſſions, void of art,
Still on thy beauties dwell:
This truth my ever conſtant heart,
This truth thy own can tell.

SCENE VII.

SEMIRA, MEGABISES.

SEMIRA.

My fears are great; ere break of day my brother
Departed hence; I met my father arm'd,
Who ſpoke not to me: Artaxerxes troubled,
Accuſes Heav'n and leaves me: Megabiſes,
What means all this? Thou know'ſt---relieve my doubts,
And teach me what to fear.

MEGABISES.

MEGABISES.

And know'ſt thou not,
That now fraternal ſtrife divides the court?
Art thou to learn that Xerxes, in his ſleep,
Is murder'd by Darius?

SEMIRA.

Heav'nly powers!
What do I hear! moſt wretched Perſia!

MEGABISES.

Ceaſe,
Ceaſe vainly to afflict thyſelf, Semira:
What part haſt thou in quarrels of ambition,
In theſe dire tumults of the royal houſe?
Perhaps you fear that Perſia's realms may want
A king to rule—O we ſhall find too many
T'exact our ſervitude! Then let the brothers
Rage on, and drench with rival blood the throne;
Whoever conquers is to me the ſame.

SEMIRA.

But in the gen'ral troubles of a ſtate,
Each bears a part; and in a faithful ſubject,
Indiff'rence is a crime. I know a ſon
Has dipp'd his impious hands in father's blood:
I know that Artaxerxes is in danger:

And would'ſt thou have me yet, a tame ſpectatreſs,
Behold the fatal ſpectacle unmov'd,
As on the tragic ſcene the mimic ſuff'rings
Of mad Oreſtes?

MEGABISES.

I perceive the love
Of Artaxerxes, in Semira ſpeaks.
But know that, either victor o'er his brother,
The throne aſcending, he'll forget Semira;
Or, if ſubdu'd, his rival's policy
Will hunt his life: thus, either way you loſe him,
A conqueror or vanquiſh'd. Would you deign
To hear the dictates of a faithful breaſt,
Select a lover like yourſelf in rank:
Reflect that Love delights in equal ſtate:
And ſhould you e'er vouchſafe t'attend my counſel,
Remember, fair one, then, who moſt adores you.

SEMIRA.

Thy counſel, ſure, is worthy of thyſelf;
And to reward it, I'll return this other,
Which better ſuits than thine—forbear to love me.

MEGABISES.

Impoſſible to ſee and not to love thee!

SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

And who compels thee then to gaze upon me?
Fly from my preſence, and ſome other ſeek,
More grateful to thy love.

MEGABISES.

My flight avails not:
Thy image ſtill remains within my breaſt:
My ſoul, ev'n abſent, doats upon thy beauties,
Still views, and ſtill adores thee: yes, Semira,
When uſe becomes a nature, what we loſe,
Our fancy forms and ſets in dreams before us.

The warrior dreams of fighting bands;
The huntſman dreams of ſylvan lands:
The fiſher dreams his ſports again,
And ſpreads the net, or ſhakes the cane.
Whene'er in ſleep I cloſe my eyes,
In ſleep I ſee her form ariſe;
Her form, for whom, alas! in vain
All day I ſigh, all day complain!

SCENE VIII.

SEMIRA *alone.*

Almighty pow'rs! Protecting Gods of Perſia!
Guard for this realm the life of Artaxerxes.

Yet, ah! ſhould he be victor o'er Darius,
To me he's loſt! this hand which, when a ſubject,
He deign'd to aſk, a ſov'reign he'll deſpiſe.
But ſhall my tears be weigh'd againſt his life?
Let him but reign, and I ſubmit to loſe him.
O! I were impious to deſire his death,
Through fear he ſhould forſake me—No, ye Gods,
I'll ne'er repent my pray'r for Artaxerxes.

Cruel fate! from love's exceſs
To wiſh to loſe what moſt I love!
Sure never maid felt ſuch diſtreſs:
No breaſt can greater torments prove.
Yet 'midſt my griefs I ſhall be bleſt,
If he I love but pitying ſays:
Too much, Semira, thou'rt oppreſt;
Whom love ungrateful thus repays.

SCENE IX.

The Palace.

MANDANE *alone.*

Where ſhall I fly, or whither ſhall I turn!
For pity's ſake, who from this fatal palace
Will lead my ſteps, or give me needful counſel?
Unhappy names of ſiſter, lover, daughter!

In

In one diſtreſsful moment muſt I loſe,
My brothers, father, lover——

SCENE X.

MANDANE, ARTAXERXES.

ARTAXERXES.

Ah! Mandane.

MANDANE.

Say, Artaxerxes, does Darius live?
Or haſt thou yet begun t'incur the guilt
Of thy poor brother's death?

ARTAXERXES.

Princeſs, I ſeek
To ſave me from the crime: My zeal, O Heav'n!
Drew from my haſty lips the cruel order;
Which ſcarcely giv'n, my ſoul was ſeiz'd with horror:
From place to place I run thro' all the palace,
To ſtop the dire effects, and aſk, in vain,
Tidings of Artaban and of Darius.

MANDANE.

See, Artaban is here.

SCENE XI.

ARTAXERXES, MANDANE, ARTABAN.

ARTABAN.

My lord!

ARTAXERXES.

My friend!

ARTABAN.

I ſought you, Sir.

ARTAXERXES.

And I've purſu'd thy ſteps.

ARTABAN.

Perhaps you fear——

ARTAXERXES.

I fear——

ARTABAN.

Diſmiſs your fears:
'Tis finiſh'd——Artaxerxes is my king:
Darius is chaſtis'd.

ARTAXERXES.

ARTAXERXES.

Immortal powers!

MANDANE.

Unhappy fate!

ARTABAN.

Th' unwary parricide
Himſelf expos'd his boſom to the ſtroke.

ARTAXERXES.

O Gods!

ARTABAN.

You ſigh—we but obey'd the order
Yourſelf had giv'n.

ARTAXERXES.

Thou ſhould'ſt have better read
My ſecret ſoul.

MANDANE.

Thou might'ſt have ſure foreſeen
His horror, his repentance.

ARTAXERXES.

In a ſon
Who loſt his father, O! thou ſhould'ſt have pitied

The firſt emotions of ungovern'd paſſion.

ARTABAN.

Such pity had been vain; t'obey the mandate
So ready were thy guards, that 'ere I ſaw them
Attack Darius, I beheld him ſlain.

ARTAXERXES.

O villains! never ſhall they drench unpuniſh'd
Their impious weapons in a prince's blood.

ARTABAN.

But, Sir! 'twas your command that made them bold,
The fatal ſtroke was yours, and yours alone.

ARTAXERXES.

'Tis all too true!---I know and own my crime:
Yes, Artaban, 'tis I indeed am guilty.

ARTABAN.

Guilty! of what? Of acting noble juſtice,
Of vengeance due to Xerxes? Be compos'd,
And think that by an impious brother's death,
A parricide is puniſh'd.

SCENE

SCENE XII.

ARTAXERXES, MANDANE, ARTABAN, SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

Artaxerxes,
Appeaſe thy troubled thoughts.

ARTAXERXES.

What means Semira,
That thus ſhe greets us with the looks of joy?

SEMIRA.

Darius is not guilty of the crime
Of Xerxes' death.

MANDANE.

Ye pow'rs! What do I hear!

ARTAXERXES.

How know'ſt thou this?

SEMIRA.

'Tis certain that th' aſſaſſin
Ev'n now was ſeiz'd; for lurking near the walls
That compaſs round the gardens of the palace,
Thy

Thy ſoldiers made him pris'ner: ev'ry token
Declar'd his guilt; the place, his flight, his looks
Of terror, ſpeech confus'd, his ſword unſheath'd,
Still reeking with the blood.

ARTAXERXES.

But ſay---his name?

SEMIRA.

Each one conceals it; when I aſk'd, they hung
Their heads in ſilence.

MANDANE.

Should it prove Arbaces. [*Aſide.*]

ARTABAN.

My ſon is taken. [*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

What a wretch am I!
Muſt Artaxerxes then aſcend the throne,
Stain'd with a murder'd brother's guiltleſs blood,
Abhorr'd by Perſia, hated by the world!

SEMIRA.

Is then Darius dead?

ARTAXERXES.

He's dead, Semira;

The barb'rous ſentence iſſu'd from theſe lips;
O! while I live I ſhall no more have peace:
The cries of my remorſe will ſound for ever
Within my tortur'd boſom: I ſhall view
A father's and a brother's angry ſhade
Diſtract my days, and terrify my dreams!
In ev'ry place will vengeful furies riſe,
In dread remembrance of a brother's murder,
And ſhake before my eyes the ſable torch
Kindled in Phlegethon's infernal ſtream.

MANDANE.

Too mighty are thy ſorrows, Artaxerxes;
Since all muſt here acquit thee of a crime,
In which thy heart, unconſcious, ne'er concurr'd.

SEMIRA.

Let your reſentment find a nobler object,
And with th' aſſaſſin's death, before the world,
Aſſert your juſtice.

ARTAXERXES.

Where's the impious wretch?
Conduct him to me.

ARTABAN.

I myſelf will go
To haſten his arrival hither.

ARTAXERXES.

Stay:
O Artaban, Semira and Mandane!
Let none in pity leave me; help me now:
Yes, I would now have near me all my friends.
Where, Artaban, where is my dear Arbaces?
Is this the friendſhip that from early years
To me he vow'd? Does he alone forſake me?

MANDANE.

And know'ſt thou not he was forbid the palace,
To puniſh him for too preſumptuous love?

ARTAXERXES.

Let him return; I here revoke the ſentence.

SCENE XIII.

ARTAXERXES, MANDANE, ARTABAN, SEMIRA, MEGABISES, ARBACES *diſarmed and guarded.*

MEGABISES.

Arbaces is the criminal.

ARTAXERXES.

Ye pow'rs!

MEGABISES.

See in thoſe looks the marks of conſcious guilt.
[*Pointing to* Arb.

ARTAXERXES.

My friend!

ARTABAN.

My ſon!

SEMIRA.

My brother!

MANDANE.

My Arbaces!

ARTAXERXES.

And does Arbaces thus return before me?
And could thy ſoul conceive ſo black a crime?

ARBACES.

I'm innocent.

MANDANE.

O grant it, gracious Heav'n!

ARTAXERXES.

ARTAXERXES.

If thou art innocent, defend thyſelf,
Remove our doubts, clear up each mark of guilt,
And let thy innocence to all appear.

ARBACES.

I am not guilty——this is my defence.

ARTABAN.

Grant he may ſtill be ſilent! [*Aſide.*]

MANDANE.

Yet thy rage
Againſt my father——

ARBACES.

O! 'twas juſt.

ARTAXERXES.

Thy flight——

ARBACES.

'Tis true, I fled.

MANDANE.

Thy ſilence——

ARBACES.

ARBACES.

Fate demands it.

ARTAXERXES.

Thy looks confus'd——

ARBACES.

They ſuit my preſent ſtate.

MANDANE.

Thy ſword beſmear'd with blood——

ARBACES.

'Tis true; my hand
That weapon bore.

ARTAXERXES.

And yet thou art not guilty?

MANDANE.

Thou didſt not kill him?

ARBACES.

I am innocent.

ARTAXERXES.

Arbaces, ſtill appearances condemn thee.

ARBACES.

I own it—yet appearance is fallacious.

ARTAXERXES.

Speaks not Semira?

SEMIRA.

O! I'm all confuſion!

ARTAXERXES.

Why ſpeaks not Artaban?

ARTABAN.

O Gods! I'm loſt
In vainly ſeeking ſome pretence to ſave him.

ARTAXERXES.

Relentleſs pow'rs! what now remains for me!
And muſt I puniſh in my deareſt friend
My moſt invet'rate foe? Cruel Arbaces!
Say, wherefore didſt thou give me once ſuch proofs
Of faith and truth? Were then thy gentle manners,
That outward ſemblance of a ſteady virtue,
The ſpecious cov'ring of a guilty ſoul?
Could I but blot that hour from my remembrance,
What time you rais'd me, where oppreſt I fell
Encompaſs'd round with foes, and bravely ſhed
With

With gen'rous zeal your blood to ranſom mine;
That while I now revenge a parent's death,
I might not ſeem ungrateful to a friend.

ARBACES.

Let not the guiltleſs loſe your former love,
If ever I deſerv'd, I ſtill deſerve it.

ARTABAN.

Preſumptuous! canſt thou claim without a bluſh
Th' affections of thy prince? Perfidious ſon!
Thy father's ſhame, thy father's puniſhment.

ARBACES.

Art thou, my father, too conſpir'd againſt me?

ARTABAN.

What wouldſt thou have from me? Shall I partake
Thy guilt by parlying with thee? No, my lord,
[*To* Artaxerxes.
Prove, prove thy juſtice; I myſelf ſolicit
His ſpeedy ſentence; plead not in his favour
That Artaban's his father—O forget
My loyal truth, forget the blood which oft
In danger's field I've laviſh'd for my country,
And mingle his with what I've ſhed before.

ARTAXERXES.

O wond'rous faith!

ARTABAN.

Reſolve—and if you ſtill
Retain ſome kindneſs for him, now forget it.

ARTAXERXES.

I will reſolve—but hard muſt prove the trial!

Ah! ceaſe awhile, your counſel ceaſe;
One moment let me breathe in peace:
In vain my reaſon would reſolve;
In vain, alas! I now revolve
The thoughts that in my boſom ſpring:
This way and that my heart they rend;
At once I'm lover, judge, and friend,
And criminal, and king!

SCENE XIV.

MANDANE, SEMIRA, ARTABAN, ARBACES, MEGABISES, GUARDS.

ARBACES.

Wretched Arbaces! muſt thou then endure,
Tho' innocent, the bitter ſting of inſult?

MEGABISES.

What ſtrange event is this?

SEMIRA.

Alas! I fear
More evils yet. [*Aſide.*

MANDANE.

My peace is loſt for ever! [*Aſide.*

ARTABAN.

I tremble while I feign. [*Aſide.*

ARBACES.

Alas! my father,
Thou doſt not look upon me—I could bear,
Without repining, all accuſers elſe;
But O! that thou ſhould'ſt riſe againſt Arbaces,
That he, who gave me life, ſhould ſeek my death,
The thought, with horror, in my boſom chills
My ſhudd'ring heart: at leaſt a father ſure
May feel ſome pity for his ſuff'ring ſon.

ARTABAN.

Thou art no more my ſon, no more
This heart a father's feeling knows;
The breaſt thou vainly doſt implore,
No pity to a traitor owes.

'Tis guilt that makes thee thus diſtreſt,
And fills with woe thy parent's breaſt.

SCENE XV.

MANDANE, SEMIRA, ARBACES, MEGABISES, GUARDS.

ARBACES.

By what offence of mine, too cruel pow'rs!
Have I incurr'd your wrath? Yet let Semira,
At leaſt vouchſafe to hear and pity me.

SEMIRA.

Let but thy innocence appear,
Thy words with tranſport ſhall I hear,
And all Semira's ſoul is thine:
But while thou bear'ſt a traitor's name,
Thou muſt not ev'n my pity claim;
In thy defence I dare not join.

SCENE XVI.

MANDANE, ARBACES, MEGABISES, GUARDS.

ARBACES.

And is there none will take this wretched life?
Ah! Megabiſes, if thy pity ever——

MEGABISES

MEGABISES.

Speak not to me.

ARBACES.

Ah! Princeſs!

MANDANE.

Hence, and leave me.

ARBACES.

Hear me, my friend.

MEGABISES.

I ſhall not hear a traitor.

SCENE XVII.

MANDANE, ARBACES, GUARDS.

ARBACES.

At leaſt, Mandane, liſten for a moment.

MANDANE.

Think not I'll liſten to a traitor's voice.

ARBACES.

My life, my ſoul!

MANDANE.

And dar'ſt thou, wretch, preſume
To call me thus? To offer me that hand
Which ſlew my father!

ARBACES.

O! I ſlew him not.

MANDANE.

Who was th' aſſaſſin? Speak.

ARBACES.

Alas! I cannot:
My lips———

MANDANE.

Thy lips are falſe.

ARBACES.

My heart——

MANDANE.

Thy heart
Is true to vice, becauſe it feels not horror
For ſuch a crime committed.

ARBACES.

I am ſtill---

MANDANE.

Thou art a traitor.

ARBACES.

I am innocent.

MANDANE.

Ha! innocent!

ARBACES.

I ſwear it.

MANDANE.

Faithleſs wretch!

ARBACES.

What pangs I ſuffer for a cruel father! [*Aſide.*]
Didſt thou but know, my life!——

MANDANE.

Too well I know
Thy hate of Xerxes.

ARBACES.

Still thou canſt not tell——

MANDANE.

I heard thy threats.

ARBACES.

And yet thou art deceiv'd.

MANDANE.

O yes, perfidious! I was then deceiv'd,
And then alone, when I believ'd and lov'd thee.

ARBACES.

Then now——

MANDANE.

I hate thee——

ARBACES.

And thou art——

MANDANE.

Thy foe.

ARBACES.

Thou ſeek'ſt——

MANDANE.

I ſeek thy death.

ARBACES.

Thy firſt affection——

MANDANE.

MANDANE.

'Tis all to hatred chang'd.

ARBACES,

And wilt thou not
Believe Arbaces?

MANDANE.

No, thou'rt falſehood all.

Tell me that thy treach'rous nature,
Ever purpos'd to deceive;
Tell me that thy heart's a traitor,
Perjur'd monſter! I'll believe.
Fain, ye Gods! I would forget him, [*Aſide.*
Fain would drive him from my thought,
Yet, alas! I cannot hate him,
As my duty ſays I ought.

SCENE XVIII.

ARBACES, GUARDS.

ARBACES.

No—fortune has no further ills in ſtore;
In one unhappy day I've found them all.

My

My friend is loſt, my ſiſter turn'd againſt me;
My father has accus'd his ſon; my lov'd
Mandane weeps; and yet I dare not ſpeak;
I muſt be ſilent ſtill. Where is the wretch
Like me diſtreſs'd! Ye righteous Gods! have pity:
If thus your wrath continues to purſue me,
'Tis more than human weakneſs can ſuſtain.

Forlorn I plough the ſtormy wave,
Without the help of ſhrouds or ſails:
The ſkies grow black, the billows rave,
The winds ariſe, the ſteerage fails:
Of all forſaken, in deſpair,
I blindly drive as fortune guides;
While innocence, which ſtill I bear,
But whelms my bark beneath the tides!

ACT II. SCENE I.

A Royal Apartment.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN.

ARTAXERXES.

Guards, from the priſon lead Arbaces hither.
[*Speaking as he enters.*
Thou haſt thy full requeſt, and would to Heav'n
This meeting might preſerve him!

ARTABAN.

Think not, Sir,
That what I aſk ſprings from paternal fondneſs,
Or ill-tim'd hopes to find him innocent;
His guilt is too apparent; he muſt die.
Your ſafety only urges me to ſee him;
As yet the motive of his crime is ſecret,
Th' accomplices unknown: I would explore
Each dark device of treaſon.

ARTAXERXES.

Artaban,
How does thy fortitude excite my envy!
I tremble at the danger of a friend;
Thou keep'ſt thy temper while thy ſon's condemn'd.

ARTABAN.

How dearly does it coſt my heart t'aſſume
Theſe looks of firmneſs, while my boſom owns
The voice of ſtruggling nature! I too feel
The tender weakneſs common to a parent:
But midſt the conflict duty ſtill prevails:
No longer he's my ſon, whoſe impious crime
Has fill'd his father's aged cheeks with ſhame:
I was a ſubject, ere I was a parent.

ARTAXERXES.

Thy virtue, friend, ſpeaks ſtrongly for Arbaces:
I owe thee more the leſs thou plead'ſt his cauſe.
Shall I be thus ungrateful to thy worth,
Without remorſe in him to puniſh thee?
No, Artaban, let us contrive to ſave him:
Find ſome pretence that I may doubt his crime;
Let me intreat thee join thy cares with mine.

ARTABAN.

What can I do when ev'ry thing condemns him?
You ſee, Arbaces, conſcious of his guilt,
Makes no defence.

ARTAXERXES.

But yet thoſe lips that ne'er
Were wont to lye, declar'd his innocence.

Can

Can nature change at once? Ah, no! perhaps
Some cauſe, to us unknown, compels his ſilence.
Speak to him, Artaban; he to a father
May open all he from his judge conceals.
I will retire apart, that thou with freedom
May'ſt urge the converſe with him: watch him nearly,
Examine all his thoughts; find, if thou canſt,
Some ſhadow of defence; preſerve thy ſon,
Thy ſov'reign's peace, the honour of his throne;
Deceive me, if thou wilt, and I'll forgive thee.

Give me my deareſt friend once more,
My friend in life approv'd;
His virtue once again reſtore,
That virtue which I lov'd.

Companions from our infant ſtate,
Thou know'ſt in ev'ry change of fate,
We kept the friendly chain:
With him I parted ev'ry care,
With him did ev'ry pleaſure ſhare,
And ſoften'd ev'ry pain.

SCENE

SCENE II.

ARTABAN, ARBACES *guarded.*

ARTABAN.

Now rides my veſſel nigh the port—Arbaces,
Approach; and you retire, but near at hand
Await my call. [*The guards retire.*

ARBACES.

My father here alone!

ARTABAN.

At length, my ſon, I may preſerve thy life.
From thoughtleſs Artaxerxes I've obtain'
To ſpeak with thee in private—let us go:
I can conduct thee by a ſecret way,
To him unknown; and thus at once deceive
His guards and him.

ARBACES.

Doſt thou propoſe a flight
That would confirm my guilt?

ARTABAN.

Unthinking boy!
Let us be gone——I give thee liberty;
I ſave

I ſave thee from the king's reſentment, lead thee
To popular applauſe——perchance to reign.

ARBACES.

What ſay you, Sir!——to reign!

ARTABAN.

Thou know'ſt the race
Of Xerxes has to all been hateful long:
I need but ſhew thee to th' impatient troops;
Already to our party have I gain'd
The leaders of the bands.

ARBACES.

Shall I become
A rebel to my prince? The thought alone
Fills me with horror: O my father! leave,
Leave me my innocence.

ARTABAN.

'Tis loſt already,
Since all believe it loſt: thou art a pris'ner,
And bear'ſt each mark of guilt.

ARBACES.

But yet unjuſtly.

ARTABAN.

No matter; this avails not: innocence
Conſiſts, Arbaces, in the fond belief
Of others; take but that belief away,
It ſhrinks to nothing: he alone is virtuous
Who wears the beſt diſguiſe, and artful hides
His inmoſt paſſions from th' obſerving world.

ARBACES.

O Sir! you are deceiv'd; the noble mind
Is to itſelf a world; approves or cenſures
In ſecret all its good or evil deeds,
Above the partial breath of vulgar crowds.

ARTABAN.

Let it be ſo——but muſt we to preſerve
Our innocence, be prodigal of life?

ARBACES.

And what is life, my father?

ARTABAN.

Life, my ſon,
Is Heav'n's moſt valu'd gift.

ARBACES.

Life is a good
That leſſens while we uſe it, ev'ry moment

Of our enjoyment is but as a ſtep
That leads us nearer to our diſſolution;
And from the cradle we begin to die.

ARTABAN.

And ſhall I then contend with thee to ſave thee?
No further reaſon ſeek——'tis my command;
Diſpatch.

ARBACES.

Forgive me, but in this I muſt
Tranſgreſs your firſt command.

ARTABAN.

Force ſhall compel you;
Follow me. [*Offers to take him by the hand.*

ARBACES.

Leave me yet in peace, my father;
Put not my duty to ſo hard a trial;
For ſhould you now conſtrain me——

ARTABAN.

Doſt thou threaten?
Ungrateful boy!——Speak out——what would'ſt thou do?

ARBACES.

Rather than follow you I'd hazard all.

ARTABAN.

Soon ſhall we ſee who conquers: follow me:
Away. [*Takes his hand.*

ARBACES.

Ho! guards!

ARTABAN.

Be ſilent.

ARBACES.

Guards! come forth;
Give me again my chains: back to my dungeon
Once more conduct me. [*Guards return.*

ARTABAN.

O! I burn with rage! [*Aſide.*]

ARBACES.

Bid me farewell, my father.

ARTABAN.

Hence, and leave me;
Think not I'll liſten to a wretch like thee.

ARBACES.

ARBACES.

When ſuch reſentment fills thy mind,
Such anger arms thy brow ſevere;
How can I hope my peace to find,
Or comfort from thy lips to hear?
Inhuman rigour, thus to drive
A father's pity from your breaſt;
And of a parent's love deprive
A ſon as guiltleſs as diſtreſt!

SCENE III.

ARTABAN *alone.*

Now, Artaban, ſubdue thy weak affections,
And to his fate reſign a rebel ſon.
And yet I cannot from my heart condemn him;
Methinks I love him more for diff'ring from me;
At once I'm fill'd with rage and admiration;
Pity and wrath by turns divide my ſoul.

SCENE IV.

ARTABAN, MEGABISES.

MEGABISES.

What doſt thou? What are now thy thoughts?
O Sir!
Why are you thus irreſolute and ſlow?
'Tis now no time to ponder, but to act:
The peers in council meet; together join'd
Are all the victims of your juſt reſentment.
There ſhall we find your rivals; theſe deſtroy'd,
The path is ſmooth'd to empire. Let us fly
To ſet Arbaces free.

ARTABAN.

Ah! Megabiſes,
What wretchedneſs is mine! my ſon refuſes
Empire and liberty; heeds not his life,
And with himſelf involves us all in ruin.

MEGABISES.

What doſt thou ſay?

ARTABAN.

Ev'n now contending with him,
I ſtrove in vain to conquer his reſolves.

MEGABISES.

MEGABISES.

Then from the priſon let us bear him off
By force.

ARTABAN.

The time we loſe to overcome
His guard's fidelity, or ſhake their valour,
Affords the king full leiſure for defence.

MEGABISES.

'Tis true: then firſt let Artaxerxes die,
And after ſave Arbaces.

ARTABAN.

But the life
Of my dear ſon remains a hoſtage for me.

MEGABISES.

Behold this remedy: let us divide
Our truſty friends between us, at one inſtant
Do you attack the priſon, I the palace.

ARTABAN.

Our forces thus divided will be weaken'd.

MEGABISES.

Something muſt be reſolv'd.

ARTABAN.

The ſafeſt courſe
Is to reſolve on nothing: we muſt now
Have time to plan anew our baffled ſchemes.

MEGABISES.

What if meanwhile Arbaces be condemn'd?

ARTABAN.

Extremity of need will teach us then
The ſpeedieſt remedy: let it ſuffice,
That thou continueſt to diſſemble yet,
And keep thy followers ſteady to my cauſe.
Meantime with caution ev'ry means I'll try
That may ſeduce the guards: till now I thought
Th' attempt was needleſs, therefore deem'd it folly,
Without neceſſity, t'increaſe our dangers.

MEGABISES.

Diſpoſe of me as to thyſelf ſeems fit.

ARTABAN.

Betray me not, my friend.

MEGABISES.

Who, I betray you?
Ah, Sir! What have you ſaid? Can you believe

I'll e'er be thus ungrateful? I remember
My low beginning: to your bounteous hand
I owe my all: you from th' ignoble vulgar
Have rais'd me to the foremoſt ranks of honour.
Ah, Sir! what have you ſaid? Shall I betray you?

ARTABAN.

What hitherto I've done for thee is little:
If fortune ſmiles upon me, Megabiſes,
Thou ſhalt perceive my love: full well I know
Thy paſſion for Semira, nor condemn it.
I have reſolv'd——behold ſhe comes——my will
Shall make thy love ſecure, and join us both
By cloſer ties.

MEGABISES.

O tranſport!

SCENE V.

ARTABAN, MEGABISES, SEMIRA.

ARTABAN.

Come, my daughter;
Behold thy huſband.

SEMIRA.

Heav'ns! What do I hear?

Is this a time, my lord, to think of nuptials;
When my unhappy brother now———

ARTABAN.

No more;
Thy marriage here may ſtand him much in ſtead.

SEMIRA.

Great is the ſacrifice—Ah! yet, my father,
Reflect again; I am———

ARTABAN.

Thou'rt loſt to ſenſe,
If thou refuſeſt my command—ſee there
Thy huſband; 'tis my will; reply no further.

Then learn to love, and ſhould he ſeem
Ungracious in your eyes;
In him a father's choice eſteem;
Reſpect it and be wiſe.
Leſs ſlow perhaps your heart will prove
To catch the gentle fire,
When midſt the temple, kindling love,
Shall Hymen's flames aſpire.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

SEMIRA, MEGABISES.

SEMIRA.

Now hear me, Megabiſes; I begin
At length to hope indulgence from your love.
May I expect you'll grant me one requeſt?

MEGABISES.

What would I not t'obey you?

SEMIRA.

Yet I fear
Thou wilt oppoſe my wiſh.

MEGABISES.

Remove that fear
By ſpeaking thy command.

SEMIRA.

O! if thou lov'ſt me
Break off theſe nuptials.

MEGABISES.

I!

SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

Yes, Megabiſes,
So may'ſt thou ſave me from my father's anger.

MEGABISES.

I would obey you: but Semira ſurely
Means but to jeſt——

SEMIRA.

O no! I ſpeak my ſoul.

MEGABISES.

It cannot be—you mean to give me torment,
I read your purpoſe.

SEMIRA.

Doſt thou then deride me?
Till now I thought thee a more gen'rous lover.

MEGABISES.

And I till now believ'd Semira wiſer.

SEMIRA.

Thus doſt thou ſhew the greatneſs of thy mind

MEGABISES.

Is this the favour thou would'ſt aſk a lover?

SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

I've open'd thee a field, where thou with praiſe,
Without offending me, may'ſt prove thy virtue.

MEGABISES.

My virtue would I prove, but not in this.

SEMIRA.

Then muſt I hope in vain?

MEGABISES.

Thou hop'ſt in vain.

SEMIRA.

Theſe tears I ſhed——

MEGABISES.

Avail not.

SEMIRA.

Theſe intreaties——

MEGABISES.

Are ſcatter'd to the wind.

SEMIRA.

Hear then, inhuman!
I will obey my father; but expect not

That ever I ſhall love thee: I ſhall ſtill
Deteſt the fatal tie that binds me to thee.
I ſwear thou ſhalt be hateful to my eyes:
Thou may'ſt poſſeſs my hand, but ne'er my heart.

MEGABISES.

I aſk it not, Semira: 'tis enough
That Megabiſes knows thee for his bride:
If hating me will ſatiate thy revenge,
Purſue thy hatred, I ſhall ne'er complain.

Fear not I ſhall e'er repine,
Call thee faithleſs or ingrate;
Hate me ſtill, but ſtill be mine,
Happy ſhall I deem my fate.

The irkſome folly I deſpiſe,
Of the lover fond and vain;
That would, in oppreſſive ties,
Liberty of thought reſtrain.

SCENE VII.

SEMIRA, MANDANE.

SEMIRA.

How many evils has one day united
For my unhappineſs!——Hear me, Mandane!

MANDANE.

Delay me not, Semira.

SEMIRA.

Whither go'ſt thou
With ſuch impatience?

MANDANE.

To the royal council.

SEMIRA.

Conduct me with thee, if my pow'r can ought
Avail Arbaces.

MANDANE.

Diff'rent are our views;
Thou ſeek'ſt to ſave him, I purſue his life.

SEMIRA.

Can thus the lover of Arbaces ſpeak?

MANDANE.

Thus Xerxes' daughter ſpeaks.

SEMIRA.

Alas! my brother
Has ſure no guilt, or for thy ſake is guilty,
Becauſe too much he lov'd thee.

MANDANE.

This, Semira,
This is his greateſt crime: his death alone
Muſt clear my honour, muſt avenge the inſult
My virtue feels, to think the love I gave him
That ſhould have rouz'd his ſoul to gen'rous deeds,
Has, to my ſhame, now mark'd him for a traitor.

SEMIRA.

Cannot the rigour of the threat'ning laws
Suffice, without thy help, to puniſh him?

MANDANE.

No, it ſuffices not: in Artaxerxes
I fear th' emotions of a tender friendſhip;
And in the nobles of the land I fear
The force of blind affection; in himſelf
I fear that unknown pow'r, that friendly ſtar
Which conquers all, and makes each heart his own.

SEMIRA.

Go then, inhuman! urge the fatal ſtroke,
Accuſe him, ſee him die—but yet reflect—
Firſt weigh thy conſtancy, thou muſt forget
Thy hopes, affections, and thy plighted faith;
Thy tenderneſs; the mutual ſighs exchang'd,
The firſt fond looks; oblit'rate from thy mind

The

The dear idea of that well known face,
From whence thy heart firſt learnt the ſighs of love.

MANDANE.

Unkind Semira, how have I deſerv'd
That you ſhould thus awaken in my ſoul
The pity that rebels againſt my duty,
Which till this hour my virtue had ſuppreſs'd?
Why will you call again ideas forth
That bid my firmeſt courage ſink before them,
And in my breaſt renew the war of thoughts?

If e'er I hop'd to triumph o'er
The tyrant Love's too cruel pow'r,
O! let me ſtill myſelf deceive;
O! let me fondly ſtill believe
My heart has burſt its chain.
But, ſince, alas! to thee 'tis known,
That hate is here my duty grown,
Why wilt thou force me now to own,
That while I ſtrive, I ſtrive in vain?

SCENE VIII.

SEMIRA *alone.*

For which of all the num'rous trials round me
Shall I firſt arm my conſtancy? Mandane,

Arbaces, Megabiſes, Artaxerxes,
My father, all are now my foes; and each
Aſſails my boſom in ſome tender part.
While one I ſeek t'oppoſe, I leave myſelf
Defenceleſs to the reſt, and find my ſtrength
Too weak alone to bear the ſhock of all.

So when ſome flood, with mighty roar,
Attempts above its bed to riſe,
To ſtop its rage, from ſhore to ſhore
In haſte th' affrighted lab'rer flies.
Vain are his toils, while here his care
The torrent's rapid courſe reſtrains;
Burſt thro' a hundred channels there,
It foams victorious o'er the plains.

SCENE IX.

A great Council Hall with a throne on one ſide, ſeats on the other for the Grandees of the kingdom. A table and chair on the right hand of the throne.

ARTAXERXES *preceded by a part of the Guards, and by the Grandees of the kingdom, and followed by the reſt of the Guards.* MEGABISES.

ARTAXERXES.

Behold, ye guardians of our Perſian realm,
Behold me ready to embrace the cares

Of

Of my paternal ſeat; but ſo unhappy,
So full of turbulence begins my reign,
This hand, yet unexperienc'd, dreads to graſp
The ſcepter of dominion: you, whoſe breaſts
Are fill'd with faith, experience, zeal and valour,
Which oft you've ſhewn to recompenſe the love
My god-like father gave you, now aſſiſt me
And guide my ſteps to tread the paths of empire.

MEGABISES.

My gracious king, Mandane and Semira
Impatient aſk admittance to your preſence.

ARTAXERXES.

Ye pow'rs!—Let them approach; full well I know
What diff'rent cauſe incites them.

SCENE X.

ARTAXERXES, MANDANE, SEMIRA, MEGABISES, GRANDEES, GUARDS.

SEMIRA.

Artaxerxes,
Have pity.

MANDANE.

Vengeance, vengeance, Artaxerxes;
I come to urge the death of one that's guilty.

SEMIRA.

I aſk the life of one that's innocent.

MANDANE.

The treaſon's certain.

SEMIRA.

Doubtful is the traitor.

MANDANE.

But all appearances condemn Arbaces.

SEMIRA.

Juſtice and reaſon muſt abſolve Arbaces.

MANDANE.

The father's blood, ſhed from his veins, requires
The murd'rer's puniſhment.

SEMIRA.

The ſon's preſerv'd,
Demands a recompenſe for its preſerver.

MANDANE.

Remember rigour is the throne's ſupport.

SEMIRA.

Reflect that mercy is its ſtrongeſt baſis.

MANDANE.

O let the ſorrows of a wretched daughter
Excite your indignation!

SEMIRA.

Let the tears
Of an afflicted ſiſter calm your anger.

MANDANE.

All whom you here behold, except Semira,
Require this ſacrifice.

SEMIRA.

Hear, Artaxerxes,
Have pity!

MANDANE.

Vengeance, vengeance!

ARTAXERXES.

Riſe—O Heav'n!——
Riſe both: how are your pains excell'd by mine!
Semira fears the rigour of my juſtice,
Mandane fears my mercy: Artaxerxes,
At once a friend and ſon, feels both your pangs,
And trembles with Mandane and Semira.
Ah! come my Artaban; ſpeak comfort to me:
[*Seeing* Artaban.

Haſt thou found aught that may defend Arbaces?
Say, has he prov'd his innocence?

SCENE XI.

ARTAXERXES, MANDANE, SEMIRA, MEGABISES, ARTABAN, GRANDEES, GUARDS.

ARTABAN.

In vain
Is all our proffer'd pity: for his ſafety
He heeds it not, or now deſpairs to find it.

ARTAXERXES.

Ingrate! and will he force me to condemn him?

SEMIRA.

Condemn him!——Too inhuman Artaxerxes!
Shall then Semira's brother, Perſia's glory,
The friend of Artaxerxes, his defender,
Bend to the fatal ignominious ax?
Wretched Arbaces! All my tears are vain!
O unregarded grief!

ARTAXERXES.

Falſely, Semira,
Thou ſay'ſt that I'm inhuman—can I more?
Thou

Thou ſee'ſt Arbaces offers no defence:
What would'ſt thou do, or what would Artaban?
Guards, let Arbaces be conducted to me:
The father's ſelf ſhall judge his ſon, ſhall hear,
And, if he can, acquit him; to his hand
I truſt, in this, my right of ſov'reign pow'r.

ARTABAN.

What have you ſaid?

MANDANE.

Shall friendſhip thus prevail
Above your duty? Sure you never ſought
His puniſhment, ſince to a father's voice
You thus commit the ſentence of the guilty.

ARTAXERXES.

Yes, I commit the ſentence to a father,
Whoſe truth is known, who has himſelf accus'd
A ſon whom now I vainly would defend;
A father, who has greater cauſe than I
T'enforce his doom.

MANDANE.

Yet is he ſtill a father.

ARTAXERXES.

Thence has he double cauſe to puniſh him:
I on Arbaces only would revenge

The death of Xerxes ſlain; but Artaban
Muſt on his ſon revenge, with greater rigour,
The death of Xerxes, and his own diſhonour.

MANDANE.

Then thus———

ARTAXERXES.

Should then Arbaces' guilt be prov'd,
I thus ſecure a victim for the king,
Without ingratitude to my preſerver.

ARTABAN.

Such trial, Sir———

ARTAXERXES.

Is worthy of thy virtue.

ARTABAN.

How will the world approve your choice?

ARTAXERXES.

Can aught
Be urg'd againſt it? Speak, ye peers, declare,
[*To the Grandees.*
Is there a doubt that prompts you to diſſent?

MEGABISES.

Each, by his ſilence, ſeems t'approve the choice.

SEMIRA.

See where my brother comes.

MANDANE.

Ah me! [*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

No more:
Let him be heard.

[Artaxerxes *aſcends the throne, and the Grandees take their places.*]

ARTABAN.

Now, now my ſoul, conceal
Thy inward pangs. [*Aſide.*]

[*Takes his ſeat at the table.*

MANDANE.

Be ſtill my beating heart! [*Aſide.*]

SCENE XII.

ARTAXERXES, MANDANE, SEMIRA, MEGABISES, GRANDEES, ARBACES *in chains*, GUARDS.

ARBACES.

Am I to Perſia then become ſo hateful,
That all are gather'd to behold my ſuff'rings?
My king———

ARTAXERXES.

Call me thy friend: fain would I ſtill
Continue thus, that I might doubt thy guilt.
And ſince th' indulgent name of friend but ill
Beſeems the judge, the trial of thy crime
To Artaban's committed.

ARBACES.

To my father!

ARTAXERXES.

To him.

ARBACES.

I freeze with horror! [*Aſide.*]

ARTABAN.

Wherefore art thou
Thus loſt in thought? Perhaps thou ſtand'ſt amaz'd
To ſee my fortitude.

ARBACES.

Alas! my father;
I'm ſtruck with horror to behold thee here,
Reflecting what I am, and what thou art.
Canſt thou then judge me? Canſt thou thus preſerve
Thy looks unchang'd, nor feel thy breaſt within
Torn by conflicting pangs?

ARTABAN.

Whate'er I feel,
'Tis not for thee t'explore my ſecret thoughts,
Or ſearch how far my heart and face agree.
Remember thou haſt made me what I am:
Had'ſt thou obſerv'd my counſels, had'ſt thou learn'd
To tread the ſteps of an indulgent father,
Before theſe peers I had not been the judge,
Nor thou the criminal.

ARTAXERXES.

Unhappy father!

MANDANE.

We come not here t'attend your private griefs:
Or let Arbaces now defend himſelf,
Or let him be condemn'd.

ARBACES.

Inhuman princeſs! [*Aſide.*]

ARTABAN.

Then let the criminal appear before me,
And anſwer my demands: thou'rt here, Arbaces,
As Xerxes' murderer; and theſe the proofs
That ſpeak thy guilt: thy raſh preſumptuous love,
Thy wrath againſt the king——

ARBACES.

My bloody weapon,
The time, the place, my fear, my flight, I know
All theſe proclaim me guilty; yet all theſe
Are other than they ſeem——I'm innocent.

ARTABAN.

Produce the proofs; clear up thy fully'd fame,
And calm the anger of diſtreſs'd Mandane.

ARBACES.

Oh! would'ſt thou have me conſtant in my ſuff'rings,
Aſſail me not in that moſt tender part.
At that lov'd name——Inhuman father——

ARTABAN.

Hold,
With paſſion blind, thou know'ſt not where thou art,
With whom thou ſpeak'ſt, or what aſſembly hears thee.

ARBACES.

But yet my father——

ARTABAN.

ARTABAN.

Yet my ſoul conceal
Thy inward pangs. [*Aſide.*]

MANDANE.

Be ſtill my beating heart. [*Aſide.*]

ARTABAN.

Thy fault demands repentance or defence.

ARTAXERXES.

O ſpeak——aſſiſt our pitying grace.

ARBACES.

My king!
I cannot ſpeak of guilt or of defence;
Nor can I find a motive to repent;
And ſhould you queſtion me a thouſand times,
I muſt a thouſand times repeat the ſame.

ARTABAN.

O filial love! [*Aſide.*]

MANDANE.

Yes, yes, his ſpeech, his ſilence
Alike declare him guilty: wherefore then
This long delay? What means the judge? Is this
The

The man that ſhould revenge his murder'd king,
And clear his own diſhonour?

ARBACES.

Doſt thou ſeek
My death, Mandane?

MANDANE.

Perſevere, my ſoul. [*Aſide.*]

ARTABAN.

Princeſs, thy juſt reproach has rouz'd my virtue:
Let Artaban pronounce the rig'rous ſentence,
And give to Perſia's realms a great example
Of loyalty and juſtice yet unknown.
I here condemn my ſon——Arbaces die.
[*Signs the paper.*

MANDANE.

O Heav'n! [*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

Defer, my friend, the fatal ſentence.

ARTABAN.

The deed is ſign'd——I have fulfill'd my duty.
[*Riſes and gives the paper.*

ARTAXERXES.

ARTAXERXES.

O barb'rous triumph!

[*Deſcends from his throne, the Grandees riſe.*

SEMIRA.

Moſt inhuman father!

MANDANE.

My tears betray me. [*Aſide.*]

ARBACES.

Does Mandane weep?
Can then my fate at length excite thy pity?

MANDANE.

Tears flow not leſs from pleaſure than from grief.

ARTABAN.

The rig'rous judge has done his part—O Sir!
Permit the father now to be indulg'd.
Forgive, my ſon, the laws of tyrant duty,
Endure with patience what remains to ſuffer:
Let not the thought of puniſhment affright thee;
The fear of evil is the greateſt evil.

ARBACES.

Alas! my conſtancy begins to ſhake,
To view myſelf before the world expos'd

A ſeeming criminal; to ſee my hopes
Thus blaſted in their ſpring; my day of life
Extinct at early dawn; to find myſelf
Hateful to Perſia, to my friend, my love;
To know my father——moſt unnat'ral father!
But whither am I hurry'd?—O farewell!

ARTABAN.

My ſoul is chill'd. [*Aſide.*]

MANDANE.

I faint. [*Aſide*]

ARBACES.

Too raſh Arbaces,
What haſt thou utter'd? Pardon me, my father;
Behold me at your feet: excuſe the tranſports
Of wild deſpair: let all my blood be ſhed,
I'll ne'er complain, nor call the ſentence cruel,
But kiſs the hand that ſigns my doom.

ARTABAN.

O riſe!
Thou haſt indeed too deep a cauſe for anguiſh.
But know---O Heav'n!——This laſt embrace and
leave me.

ARBACES.

ARBACES.

While on this dear embrace I dwell,
O hear me by this laſt farewell!
Preſerve thyſelf from ill, remove
This cruel ſcorn from her I love;
And ſtill my king defend.
I meet my death without regret,
If all the woes that Perſia threat
On me alone deſcend.

SCENE XIII.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN, MANDANE, SEMIRA.

MANDANE.

Arbaces gone, I now indeed begin
To feel the ſtroke of death.

ARTABAN.

Behold, Mandane,
T'appeaſe thy rage I ſhed my deareſt blood.

MANDANE.

Ah! wretch! fly from my preſence, from the light
Of Heav'n, the golden ſtars: hide thee, inhuman,

Deep in the hollow earth's moſt dark receſs,
If earth herſelf will in her entrails yield
A ſhelter for a cruel impious father,
Loſt to affection, and to nature loſt!

ARTABAN.

And is my virtue then——

MANDANE.

Barbarian! peace:
What virtue doſt thou boaſt? Virtue has ſtill
Its bounds preſcrib'd; extending to exceſs,
It grows a vice.

ARTABAN.

But art not thou the ſame
That urg'd my tardy juſtice?

MANDANE.

Yes, I am;
And glory in my rigour——Let Arbaces
Be judg'd again, again I'll urge his ſentence.
Mandane's duty was t'avenge a father,
But Artaban's to ſave a ſon: compaſſion
Became thy ſtate, and hatred ſuited mine.
I was forbid to liſten to the call
Of tender love, but thou ſhould'ſt have forgot
The rig'rous judge: ſuch were our diff'rent duties,
Hence

Hence to Hircania's woods confin'd,
Whoſe gloom a thouſand monſters hides;
There none amid the ſavage kind,
So cruel as thyſelf reſides.
Whate'er of evil Afric forms,
Whoſe ſands are parch'd with burning heat;
Whate'er is ſeen in raging ſtorms,
All, all, in thee collected meet.

SCENE XIV.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN, SEMIRA.

ARTAXERXES.

O my Semira! how has Heav'n conſpir'd
To ruin poor Arbaces!

SEMIRA.

Barb'rous tyrant!
And art thou chang'd ſo ſoon? Firſt would'ſt thou kill
Thy friend, and then lament him?

ARTAXERXES.

To his father

I gave the pow'r t'acquit or to condemn him.
And am I then a tyrant? Have I kill'd him?

SEMIRA.

O! 'tis the moſt ingenious cruelty!
The father judging, was compell'd to act
Subſervient to the laws; to thee, a king,
The laws were ſubject: pity had in him
Been criminal, but was from thee a duty:
No, rather tell me that with ſavage joy,
Thou ſee'ſt a ſon ſlain by his father's doom;
That friendſhip and that love are thine no more.

ARTAXERXES.

Let Perſia witneſs for me, that I now
Am grateful to Arbaces, that I feel
Compaſſion for my friend, and love for thee.

SEMIRA.

Yes, till this hour, I with the world deceiv'd,
Admir'd thy ſeeming virtue, and believ'd thee
A tender lover, and a gen'rous friend:
But now, one moment ſhews thee, as thou art,
A treach'rous friend, and an inhuman lover.

When

When love with unreſiſted chains
The natives of the woods conſtrains,
Th' Armenian tigreſs drops her rage,
The lion learns his wrath t'aſſuage.
But thou with wrath more fell indu'd,
Than ev'ry ſavage of the wood,
Canſt bid thy heart relentleſs prove
To ev'ry tender call of love.

SCENE XV.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN.

ARTAXERXES.

Didſt thou not hear unkind Semira's rage?

ARTABAN.

Didſt thou not hear unjuſt Mandane's anger?

ARTAXERXES.

I'm all compaſſion, yet ſhe calls me tyrant.

ARTABAN.

I'm only juſt, and yet ſhe calls me cruel.

ARTAXERXES.

And does my mercy meet with this reward?

ARTABAN.

Is this the recompenſe of rigid virtue?

ARTAXERXES.

O Artaban! in one diſtreſsful day,
What loſs have I ſuſtain'd!

ARTABAN.

Forbear to murmur;
Leave, leave complaints to me, for I this day
Of all mankind am ſurely moſt unhappy.

ARTAXERXES.

Great are thy pains indeed, nor little mine.

Alas! I know not of the two,
To which compaſſion moſt is due,
The friend or father's ſtate:
But this I to my grief muſt own,
That love in me was choice alone,
In thee decreed by fate.

SCENE

SCENE XVI.

ARTABAN *alone.*

At length I am alone, and once again
Can breathe at liberty: to hear myſelf
Declar'd Arbaces' judge, had almoſt loſt me.
But let me think no more on perils paſt,
Myſelf I've ſav'd, now let me ſave my ſon.

So when the ſudden light'ning flies,
The ſhepherd, ſtruck with pale ſurprize,
Falls ſenſeleſs to the ground:
But when he finds his fears were vain,
Again he riſes, breathes again;
And careful numbers on the plain
His frighted flock diſpers'd around.

ACT III. SCENE I.

An inner part of the Citadel where ARBACES *is confined. A view of ſeveral Priſons. A little door on the right hand that leads up to the Palace.*

ARBACES.

Ah! why ſhould death ſo ſlowly move,
When death is but the end of woe?
To thoſe who happy fortune prove,
Death only can be deem'd a foe.

SCENE II.

ARBACES, ARTAXERXES.

ARTAXERXES.

Arbaces.

ARBACES.

O ye pow'rs! Whom do I ſee!
What brings you to theſe ſeats of grief and horror?

ARTAXERXES.

Pity and friendſhip.

ARBACES.

Wherefore come you, Sir,
To ſhare my wretchedneſs?

ARTAXERXES.

I come to ſave thee.

ARBACES.

To ſave me!

ARTAXERXES.

Linger not——but where yon' way
Leads to a lonely quarter of the palace,
Direct thy haſty ſteps: fly, ſwiftly fly,
Far, far from hence, and ſeek ſome ſafer realm:
Remember Artaxerxes, love him ſtill,
And live.

ARBACES.

My king, if you believe me guilty,
Why would you ſave me? and if innocent,
Then wherefore ſhould I fly?

ARTAXERXES.

If thou art guilty
I give thee back the life thou gav'ſt to me;
If thou art innocent, I offer now
The only means by which thou canſt eſcape,
While thou continueſt ſilent——Spare thy friend
The grief of killing thee; appeaſe the tumults
Of this diſtracted boſom: whether friendſhip

Has

Has o'er my ſenſes caſt her partial veil,
Or that ſome God protects the innocent,
I have no peace till thou art ſafe: methinks
I hear a ſecret voice that bids me weigh
Thy merit and thy fault in equal ſcales;
And now reminds me that the crime is doubtful,
But certain is the virtue that preſerv'd me.

ARBACES.

Permit me, Sir, to die; before the world
I ſtand condemn'd; your dignity compels you
To ſee me puniſh'd; I ſhall die contented
To think that once I ſav'd my friend his life,
And dying now preſerve my ſov'reign's honour.

ARTAXERXES.

Such ſentiments ne'er came from guilty lips:
Belov'd Arbaces, let us not delay:
Enough that for my honour it be rumour'd
Thou wert in private puniſh'd, that I fear'd
To ſtain the pomp of this important day,
When Aſia firſt beholds me on the throne.

ARBACES.

At length your mercy may be known—and then—

ARTAXERXES.

Arbaces, hence; I beg thee to depart;

And

And if th'intreaties of thy friend avail not,
Thy king commands it.

ARBACES.

Yes, I will obey:
Some future time Arbaces may be grateful:
Meanwhile Heav'n hear my vows for Artaxerxes:
May ev'ry year of his auſpicious reign
Be mark'd with triumphs: may the ſubject world
Bring palms and laurels for his conqu'ring arms:
Slow may the Parcæ wind his thread of life;
And may that peace be his which I have loſt;
Which never more this boſom muſt regain,
Till to my friend and country I return!

The ſtream, divided from the main,
Bathes the mountain, bathes the plain;
In ſome cryſtal river goes,
Or confin'd in fountains flows:
Still with ſighs it ſeems to mourn,
Gently murm'ring to return
To the ſea from whence it roſe:
Whence was drawn its limpid ſtore,
Where, its many wand'rings o'er,
Again it hopes to find repoſe.

SCENE

SCENE III.

ARTAXERXES *alone.*

Thoſe looks erect, that open mien of virtue
Can never ſpeak the traitor: no diſguiſe
Can hide the luſtre of a noble mind;
And in the features oft we read the heart.

Light vapours that aſcending play,
And ſpread with fleecy clouds the day,
May thinly veil,
But not conceal
The ſun's refulgent ray.

In vain the ſhallow riv'let flows
The ſandy bed to hide;
The clear tranſparent cryſtal ſhows
Each reed beneath the tide.

SCENE IV.

ARTABAN *followed by the Conſpirators,* MEGABISES.

ARTABAN.

My ſon, Arbaces! Whither art thou gone?
He ſurely hears my voice——Arbaces---Heav'ns!
Where

Where lurks he? While I ſeek my ſon, my friends,
The care be yours to keep this paſs ſecure.
[*Enters betwixt the ſcenes, on the right hand.*

MEGABISES.

And wherefore do ye loiter ſtill? [*To the Conſpirators.*
The time
Now calls us forth—But where is Artaban?
Where is Arbaces? Wherefore this inaction?
In ſuch an enterprize is this a ſeaſon
For cold neglect?—What hoa! Lord Artaban.
[*Enters betwixt the ſcenes, on the left hand.*

ARTABAN.

Unhappy me! [*Coming out a different way.*
My ſon, my ſon is loſt!
A deadly coldneſs freezes at my heart:
I fear, I doubt——yet there perhaps conceal'd,
I yet may find——Ha! Megabiſes here!
[*Meets* Megabiſes.

MEGABISES.

What Artaban!

ARTABAN.

Say, haſt thou found my ſon?

MEGABISES.

Haſt thou not ſeen him then?

ARTABAN.

O Heav'n! my doubts
Still more and more increaſe.

MEGABISES.

Explain yourſelf;
What has befall'n Arbaces?

ARTABAN.

Who, alas!
Can now inform me of him? I'm diſtracted
Amidſt a thouſand cares and dread ſuſpicions.
How many fatal images has fear
Rais'd in my tortur'd breaſt! Who knows his fate!
Who knows if yet he lives?

MEGABISES.

Too ſoon you drive
Suſpicions to extremes; may not Mandane
Or Artaxerxes, urg'd by love or friendſhip,
Have ſet the pris'ner free? Behold the way
That to the palace leads.

ARTABAN.

But wherefore yet
From me conceal his flight? Ah! Megabiſes,
Arbaces is no more; I know it well,
And each in pity hides it from his father.

MEGABISES.

Avert the omen, Heav'n! Yet recollect
Your troubled thoughts; reſume your wonted firmneſs;
Our enterprize demands it all.

ARTABAN.

Alas!
What enterprize can now engroſs my mind?
I have no enterprize——my ſon is loſt!

MEGABISES.

What ſays my lord? And have you then in vain
Seduc'd the royal guards? Have I in vain
Seduc'd th' allegiance of the troops?—Reſolve:
This moment Artaxerxes goes to ſwear
Obſervance to the laws: the ſacred cup
By your command already have I ting'd
With deadly juice: and ſhall we now ſo poorly
Loſe all our cares and toils?

ARTABAN.

For whom, my friend,
Should I ſtill toil, unleſs I find Arbaces?
My ſon was all my joy; to make him great
I firſt became a traitor; for his ſake
Was odious to myſelf; depriv'd of him,

What

What further hope remains? I loſe the fruit
Of all my crimes.

MEGABISES.

Arbaces, dead or living,
Claims at your hands the empire, or revenge.

ARTABAN.

For that alone I live—Yes, Megabiſes,
Lead, lead me where thou wilt; I truſt in thee.

MEGABISES.

Truſt that I lead thee on to victory.

O! let the ſplendor of a crown
To fearleſs deeds thy ſoul inſpire:
O! let the danger of a ſon
With gen'rous rage thy boſom fire.
The heart that brave revenge purſues,
Can ev'ry feeble thought controul:
And ſweet 'tis then the calm to loſe
Amidſt the tempeſt of the ſoul.

SCENE V.

ARTABAN *alone.*

Relentleſs Gods! you now have found the way,
The only way t'unman me: but to doubt

If yet my dear Arbaces lives diſtracts me;
I cannot overcome this ſecret tumult,
That from my reaſon takes the pow'r to govern.

If thou, my ſon, to life art loſt,
No more I'll breathe the vital air;
But firſt, diſpatch'd to Pluto's coaſt,
A monarch ſhall my meſſage bear.
Beſide the ſable ſtream his oar
Th' infernal pilot ſhall ſuſpend,
Till to the margin of the ſhore
The mournful father ſhall deſcend.

SCENE VI.

An Apartment belonging to MANDANE.

MANDANE.

Whether too frequent ſorrow dulls the ſenſe,
Or that our ſouls partake ſome inward light
That glances at futurity, I know not:
I cannot mourn Arbaces as I ought:
Yet ſurely ſtill he lives, for were he dead,
The tidings muſt have reach'd me; fame is ever
Induſtrious to diſperſe the news of woe.

SCENE VII.

MANDANE, SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

At length thou may'ſt be comforted, Mandane,
For Heav'n now ſmiles upon thee.

MANDANE.

Has the king
Releas'd Arbaces?

SEMIRA.

Rather ſay the king
Has ſlain Arbaces.

MANDANE.

Ha! What doſt thou mean?

SEMIRA.

'Tis plain to all; in ſecret has he fall'n
A cruel ſacrifice.

MANDANE.

Fallacious hopes!
O fatal day!

SEMIRA.

SEMIRA.

Behold thou art reveng'd,
Thy rage is fated: would'ſt thou more? Or ſeek'ſt thou
Some other victim? Speak.

MANDANE.

Alas! Semira,
Light evils ſpeak, but mighty griefs are ſilent.

SEMIRA.

What heart was e'er more cruel found than thine!
There's not an eye unmoiſten'd at his death,
Yet thou canſt hear his fate without a tear.

MANDANE.

That grief is little which permits our tears.

SEMIRA.

Go, if thou art not yet appeas'd, and glut
With my dear brother's corſe thy greedy ſight:
Obſerve his boſom, number o'er his wounds,
Then, with exulting looks———

MANDANE.

Forbear, and leave me.

SEMIRA.

Leave thee!—forbear!—no, while my life remains
Thou ſhalt behold me ever hov'ring round thee;
I'll haunt thee ſtill, and make thy days unhappy.

MANDANE.

Say when have I deſerv'd ſo many foes?

Wherefore this inſulting ſtrain?
Muſt I bear a cruel name?
Ceaſe, inhuman maid, in vain
Ceaſe Mandane's heart to blame.
Think, abandon'd to deſpair,
What from thee, ingrate, I prove:
Think, Semira, can I bear
Hatred from the friend I love?

SCENE VIII.

SEMIRA *alone.*

What has my raſhneſs done? I vainly hop'd
That grief divided would decreaſe the burthen;
But ah! it ſwells the more; while now I thought
To eaſe myſelf by inſults on Mandane,
I pierc'd her heart, without relieving mine.

'Tis

'Tis falſe to think content we find,
Whene'er with us in ſorrow join'd,
Another's tears o'erflow:
To ſee a friend oppreſt with grief,
Affords th' afflicted no relief,
But ſwells the ſighs of woe.

SCENE IX.

ARBACES *alone.*

Yet here I find her not——O grant, ye pow'rs!
That I may calm my lov'd Mandane's anger,
Once more behold her, and depart in peace.
Perhaps retir'd to ſome more lone apartment
I may——but whither would my raſhneſs lead me?
O Heav'n! Behold ſhe comes! I have no heart
To venture in her ſight. [*Retires.*

SCENE X.

ARBACES *apart*, MANDANE.

MANDANE.

Let none preſume
To break on my retirement. [*To a Page, who*
[*having received the order, departs.*

Now, my ſoul,
Thou may'ſt at liberty indulge thy anguiſh,
Thy wild deſpair—Yes, yes, my dear Arbaces,
My ſavage fury ſhed thy blood, and now
My own ſhall flow t'appeaſe thee. [*Draws a dagger.*

ARBACES.

Hold!

MANDANE.

Ye pow'rs!
[*Seeing* Arbaces, *ſhe lets fall the dagger.*

ARBACES.

What inconſid'rate rage!

MANDANE.

Arbaces here!
In freedom and alive!

ARBACES.

A friendly hand
Struck off my chains.

MANDANE.

Fly hence! Begone! Ah! leave me—
What will be ſaid if here thou'rt found? Ingrate,
Leave then my fame unſully'd.

ARBACES.

ARBACES.

Who can quit
His native land without beholding thee?

MANDANE.

What would'ſt thou ſeek from me, perfidious traitor!

ARBACES.

Ah! princeſs; ſpeak not thus—I know full well
Thou wear'ſt a ſternneſs foreign to thy heart.
Did I not hear thee? Yes, my dear Mandane,
Arbaces heard thy love.

MANDANE.

'Tis falſehood all,
Or ſelf deceit; but grant I've ſpoken ought,
My lips, betray'd by uſe, bely'd my ſoul.

ARBACES.

Yet am I ſtill the object of your paſſion.

MANDANE.

Thou art my deteſtation.

ARBACES.

Cruel maid!
Take then this ſword, and ſate thy utmoſt rage;

Behold my boſom bare to meet the blow.

MANDANE.

Death would reward, not puniſh thee.

ARBACES.

'Tis true:
Forgive me, I have err'd; but with this hand
All ſhall be heal'd. [*About to ſtab himſelf.*

MANDANE.

What would'ſt thou do? Perhaps
Thou think'ſt thy blood ſufficient to appeaſe me:
No, I would have thy death a ſpectacle
Of public infamy; no mark, no ſhadow
Of gen'rous courage muſt adorn thy fall.

ARBACES.

Ingrate, inhuman! thou ſhalt have thy wiſh;
[*Throws away the dagger.*
I'll ſeek again my priſon. [*Going.*

MANDANE.

Stay, Arbaces!

ARBACES.

What would'ſt thou ſay?

MANDANE.

MANDANE.

Alas! I know not what!

ARBACES.

And haſt thou yet ſome ſmall degree of love
That ſtill detains me here?

MANDANE.

Enquire no further:
Why would'ſt thou raiſe my bluſhes? Save thyſelf,
No more afflict me.

ARBACES.

Still thou lov'ſt Arbaces,
If thus thou'rt mov'd to pity him.

MANDANE.

O no!
Believe not that 'tis love: but fly and live!

ARBACES.

Thou bid'ſt me, dear Mandane, live,
But if thy love thou wilt not give,
My tortur'd heart muſt break!

MANDANE.

Ye pow'rs! how cruel is my pain!
O let theſe bluſhes then explain
The thoughts I dare not ſpeak.

ARBACES.

Hear me once more.

MANDANE.

Ah no!

ARBACES.

Thou art, Mandane—

MANDANE.

Light of theſe deſiring eyes!
Leave me, leave me yet in peace!

BOTH.

Tell me when, relentleſs ſkies!
When your fatal rage will ceaſe?

What cannot human life ſuſtain,
If life can bear ſuch cruel pain!

SCENE

SCENE XI.

A magnificent place deſigned for the coronation of ARTAXERXES. *A throne on one ſide, with a ſcepter and crown thereon. An altar kindled in the midſt, with an image of the Sun.*

ARTAXERXES *and* ARTABAN, *with a numerous attendance: and* PEOPLE.

ARTAXERXES.

To you, my people, I preſent myſelf,
No leſs your father than your king: be you
My children more than ſubjects: I'll defend
Your lives, your fame; whatever arms may gain,
Or peace beſtow: do you defend my throne:
And let our hearts now make the juſt exchange
Of loyalty and love: the reins of empire
I'll ſway with gentle hand, and guard the laws
Inviolate——this to perform, to all
Religiouſly I ſwear. [*An attendant brings the cup.*

ARTABAN.

The ſacred cup [*Gives the cup.*
Receive, and bind thy oath with ſtronger ties,
Compleat the rite—and drink thy own deſtruction.
[*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

ARTAXERXES.

" Bright God! by whom the vernal flow'rs ariſe;
" By whom the whole creation lives or dies;
" Hear!—if my lips the words of falſehood ſpeak,
" On this devoted head your vengeance break:
" Let my life fade, as now the languid flame
" Fades at the pouring of the ſacred ſtream:
[*Sheds part of the wine upon the fire.*
" And while I drink ſome ſecret bane infuſe;
" To deadly poiſon change the vital juice.
[*About to drink.*

SCENE XII.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN, SEMIRA, PEOPLE.

SEMIRA.

Defend yourſelf, my lord, the palace wall,
Encompaſs'd by a faithleſs throng, reſounds
With rebel ſhouts——and all require thy death.

ARTAXERXES.

Almighty pow'rs!

ARTABAN.

What impious wretch has dar'd
To riſe againſt his king?

ARTAXERXES.

Alas! too late
I know him now——Arbaces is the traitor.

SEMIRA.

He whom we mourn'd as dead.

ARTAXERXES.

He lives, th' ingrate:
He lives——forgetful of my faith to Xerxes,
Forgetful of my duty to my father,
I ſet him free, and merit to receive
The puniſhment which Heav'n has deſtin'd for me:
Yes, I myſelf have woo'd my own deſtruction.

ARTABAN.

Why ſhould you fear, my king? For your protection
Your faithful Artaban ſhall ſtill ſuffice.

ARTAXERXES.

Then let us haſte to puniſh—— [*Going.*

SCENE

SCENE XIII.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN, SEMIRA, MANDANE, PEOPLE.

MANDANE.

Stay, my brother;
Great news I bring—the tumult is appeas'd.

ARTAXERXES.

Is't poſſible? Say, how?

MANDANE.

The rebel crowd,
By Megabiſes led, had reach'd already
The inner palace yard, when brave Arbaces,
Rouz'd by the madd'ning clamour, came to aid thee;
What ſaid, what did he not for thy defence?
He painted all the horrors of their crime,
And ſhew'd the praiſe that waits on loyalty.
He ſet thy merits and thy fame before them:
On ſome with threats he wrought, on ſome with pray'rs;
Oft chang'd his looks, from placid to ſevere;
Till each laid down his arms, and Megabiſes
The impious cauſe of all alone remain'd;
But him he conquer'd, ſlew, and thus reveng'd thee.

ARTABAN.

ARTABAN.

Raſh, inconſid'rate ſon! [*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

Some friendly pow'r
Inſpir'd me to preſerve him——Megabiſes
Was author then of ev'ry crime committed.

ARTABAN.

Moſt fortunate deluſion! [*Aſide.*]

ARTAXERXES.

Where is now
My lov'd Arbaces? Find and bring him hither.

SCENE LAST.

ARTAXERXES, ARTABAN, SEMIRA, MANDANE, ARBACES, PEOPLE.

ARBACES.

Behold, my lord, Arbaces at your feet.

ARTAXERXES.

Come to my breaſt again: forgive me, friend,
That e'er I doubted thee: thy innocence

Is

Is now moſt clear: O give me then the pow'r
To recompenſe thee; from the people's mind
Chace ev'ry dark ſuſpicion; tell us why
That crimſon ſteel was in thy hand; what meant
Thy flight, thy ſilence, all that ſpoke thee guilty?

ARBACES.

O Sir! if aught from you I have deſerv'd,
Permit me to be ſilent ſtill——my lips
Are guiltleſs of a lie——believe his faith
Who once preſerv'd thy life——I'm innocent.

ARTAXERXES.

Swear it at leaſt, and let the ſolemn rite
Confirm thy truth: behold the ready cup,
And as the cuſtom of our Perſia claims,
Call down ſome God to witneſs.

ARBACES.

I am ready.
[*Takes the cup.*

MANDANE.

Behold my lov'd Arbaces freed from danger. [*Aſide.*]

ARTABAN.

Where am I? Should he ſwear, my ſon is poiſon'd.
[*Aſide.*]

ARBACES.

ARBACES.

" Bright God! by whom the vernal flow'rs ariſe,
" By whom the whole creation lives or dies."

ARTABAN.

O me unhappy! [*Aſide.*]

ARBACES.

" If I falſehood ſpeak,
" This vital bev'rage—— [*About to drink.*

ARTABAN.

Hold! the cup is poiſon'd.

ARTAXERXES.

What do I hear?

ARBACES.

O Gods!

ARTAXERXES.

And why till now
Didſt thou conceal it from me?

ARTABAN.

'Twas for thee
I had prepar'd it.

ARTAXERXES.

What could urge thy rage?

ARTABAN.

Diſſimulation can no more avail:
Paternal love already has betray'd me.
I was the murderer of Xerxes; all
The royal blood I ſought to ſhed: 'tis I
Am guilty, not Arbaces: to his hand,
I, to conceal it, gave the bloody weapon.
His looks proclaim'd his horror for my crime;
His ſilence the compaſſion of a ſon:
O had not virtue wrought ſo ſtrong in him,
Or love in me, I had fulfill'd my purpoſe,
And had depriv'd thee now of life and empire.

ARTAXERXES.

Perfidious wretch! my father haſt thou murder'd,
And made me guilty of Darius' death:
To what exceſſes has thy impious thirſt
Of greatneſs led thee!——Traitor, thou ſhalt die.

ARTABAN.

At leaſt we'll die together. [*Draws his ſword,*
[Artaxerxes *does the ſame.*

ARBACES.

Heav'ns!

ARTABAN.

My friends,
Heed not his threats, the feeble laſt remains
Of deſperation——let the tyrant die.

[*The Guards, ſeduc'd by* Artaban, *prepare to attack* Artaxerxes.

ARBACES.

What would'ſt thou do, my father?

ARTABAN.

Bravely periſh.

ARBACES.

Lay by thy ſword, or here I drink my death.

ARTABAN.

What ſay'ſt thou, ha!

ARBACES.

O, if you kill my friend,
My Artaxerxes, I can live no longer.

ARTABAN.

Let me compleat what I've begun. [*Going to attack* Artaxerxes.

ARBACES.

Take heed,
Or here I drink. [*About to drink.*

ARTABAN.

Stay then, ungrateful ſon!
And doſt thou wiſh to ſee thy father die,
Becauſe too well he lov'd thee? Yes, ingrate,
Yes, thou haſt conquer'd—there—behold my ſword.
[*Throws away his ſword, and the rebel Guards fly.*

MANDANE.

Faith unexampled!

SEMIRA.

Treachery unequall'd!

ARTAXERXES.

Purſue the rebels, and let Artaban
Be led to inſtant death.

ARBACES.

O Heav'n!——yet ſtay;
Have pity, Sir.

ARTAXERXES.

Hope not for mercy for him,
His crime's too great: yet think not I confound

The innocent and guilty; thou Arbaces
Shalt wed Mandane, and the fair Semira
With me divide the throne; but for that traitor
No pardon can be granted.

ARBACES.

Take my life,
I aſk it not, if by my truth to you,
If, by preſerving you, I kill my father!

ARTAXERXES.

O virtue that excites our admiration!

ARBACES.

I do not aſk your mercy for myſelf;
Be rig'rous ſtill——but change his death for mine.
Hear him, who once preſerv'd you, at your feet
[*Kneels.*
Now kneeling beg to ſuffer for a father.
Thus, thus appeaſe your juſtice, ſhed my blood,
And, ſhedding mine, the blood of Artaban.

ARTAXERXES.

O riſe——no more——dry up thoſe gen'rous tears,
Who can reſiſt thee? Artaban ſhall live,
But let him live at leaſt in mournful exile;
Thus far thy Sov'reign grants thy pious ſuit;
The virtuous ſon preſerves the guilty father.

CHORUS.

Great King! with reverence Perfia fees
Mercy ſeated on the throne,
When forgiveneſs ſhe decrees
A hero's loyalty to crown.

Juſtice ſtill we brighter find,
When with godlike Pity join'd!

FINIS.

THE OLYMPIAD.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

CLISTHENES, King of SICYON, Father of ARISTEA.

ARISTEA, in love with MEGACLES.

ARGENE, a CRETAN Lady, in the dreſs of a Shepherdeſs, under the name of LYCORIS, in love with LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS, in love with ARISTEA, and Friend of MEGACLES.

MEGACLES, in love with ARISTEA, and Friend of LYCIDAS.

AMYNTAS, the Governor of LYCIDAS.

ALCANDER, the Confident of CLISTHENES.

The SCENE lies in the Fields of ELIS, near the City OLYMPIA, on the Banks of the River ALPHEUS.

Isaac Taylor del. et fecit.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The woody part of a deep valley, with high trees that grow upon the oppoſite hills, the branches of the Trees meeting overſhade the valley that lies between them.

LYCIDAS, AMYNTAS.

LYCIDAS.

AMYNTAS, I'm reſolv'd—forbear to urge
Thy fruitleſs counſels———

AMYNTAS.

Hear me, Lycidas;
Calm yet a little this tempeſtuous paſſion.

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

In whom again ſhall Lycidas confide,
If Megacles deceives him? Megacles,
Ev'n in the greateſt need, deſerts his friend.
Moſt wretched he who truſts his future bliſs
On friendſhip's doubtful faith!

AMYNTAS.

Be not too raſh
In cenſuring his delay: no little ſpace
Divides fair Elis from the Cretan ſhore
Where Megacles reſides: muſt your impatience
Give wings to him? Perchance your meſſenger
Might linger on his way: the ſea that rolls
His tides between, may ſtay your friend: be calm,
He ſtill may come in time. Th' Olympic games
Begin not till the ſun has paſs'd the noon,
And ſcarce Aurora yet proclaims the dawn.

LYCIDAS.

Thou know'ſt that all who hope the victor's prize,
Should with the morn appear within the temple,
To tell their rank, their country, and their name;
And ſwear at Jove's high altar, not t'employ
Or fraud or circumvention in the field.

AMYNTAS.

I know it well.

LYCIDAS.

Thou know'ſt that he who comes
Too late to execute this ſolemn rite,
Muſt ſtand excluded from the glorious trial.
See'ſt thou not how the combatants already
Throng to the temple? Hear the rural ſhouts
Of eager multitudes; then ſay, Amyntas,
What have I more t'expect? What hopes remain?

AMYNTAS.

But what is thy deſign?

LYCIDAS.

Among the train
T'appear before the altar.

AMYNTAS.

What beſides?

LYCIDAS.

Prove with the reſt my fortune in the field.

AMYNTAS.

Thou, Lycidas!

LYCIDAS.

And doſt thou think my courage
Unequal to th' attempt?

AMYNTAS.

Alas! my prince,
Here nought avails the ſkill in ſanguine fields
To wield the gleaming faulchion; other arms,
Far other forms of war muſt here be try'd;
Far other arts, the names to us unknown;
The dreadful deſtus and the pond'rous diſk;
Theſe to your rivals are familiar grown,
By frequent exerciſe; but you, untaught,
In the firſt ardor of unthinking youth,
Too late may mourn with them th' unequal conflict.

LYCIDAS.

Had Megacles, expert in arts like theſe,
Arriv'd in time, his valour had ſupply'd
The place of Lycidas: but ſince he's abſent,
What elſe remains for me? This day, Amyntas,
Th' Olympic combatants contend not only
For olive wreaths, the victor's wonted meed,
But Ariſtea is the bright reward;
The royal heir of mighty Cliſthenes;
The firſt and lovelieſt of our Grecian dames,
Whoſe charms have kindled in my breaſt a flame,
That blazes forth even in its infancy.

AMYNTAS.

What then of Argene?

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

Theſe eyes no more
Muſt hope to ſee her: love no longer lives
When hope expires.

AMYNTAS.

And yet you oft have ſworn—

LYCIDAS.

I know thy purpoſe, thou would'ſt here detain me
In fruitleſs converſe till the hour is paſt.
Farewell.

AMYNTAS.

Yet hear me.

LYCIDAS.

No.

AMYNTAS.

Behold where comes—

LYCIDAS.

Who comes, Amyntas?

AMYNTAS.

Megacles.

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

Ha! where?

AMYNTAS.

Between thoſe tufted trees——no——'tis not him,

LYCIDAS.

Thou doſt but mock me; and indeed, Amyntas,
I well deſerve it, who could blindly place
My hope in Megacles.

SCENE II.

LYCIDAS, AMYNTAS, MEGACLES.

AMYNTAS.

Behold him here——

LYCIDAS.

Ye righteous pow'rs!

MEGACLES.

My prince!

LYCIDAS.

My friend! O come,
Come to my breaſt: my hopes again revive.

MEGACLES.

And is it true that Heav'n affords me once
The means to ſhew the gratitude I owe you?

LYCIDAS.

Yes, thou canſt give me happineſs and life.

MEGACLES.

Say, how?

LYCIDAS.

By ent'ring on th' Olympic games
Beneath my name, and combating for me.

MEGACLES.

Are you in Elis yet unknown?

LYCIDAS.

I am.

MEGACLES.

By this device what would you ſeek?

LYCIDAS.

My peace.
O Heav'n! let us not waſte the time——this hour
The rival combatants muſt give their names.

Fly

Fly to the temple; ſay thou'rt Lycidas;
If thou delay'ſt, thy coming here is vain;
Go—I will tell thee all at thy return.

MEGACLES.

With ſecret pride, my friend, I go
The name of Lycidas to wear;
That all the much lov'd name may know,
Which ever in my heart I bear.
Obſerving Greece henceforth ſhall ſay,
Our thoughts, or actions are the ſame;
Our hearts the like affections ſway,
Nor have we differ'd ev'n in name.

SCENE III.

LYCIDAS, AMYNTAS.

LYCIDAS.

O gen'rous friend! O faithful Megacles!

AMYNTAS.

It was not thus you ſpoke of him but now.

LYCIDAS.

View me at length poſſeſs'd of Ariſtea;
Go, dear Amyntas, ſee that all's prepar'd;

I, with

I, with my ſpouſe, will ere the cloſe of day
Depart from Elis.

AMYNTAS.

Prince, be not ſo ready
To fancy happineſs: you yet have much
To fear; your artifice may be diſcover'd;
Or in the trial Megacles may fail.
I know he ever has been found victorious;
Yet well I know an unforeſeen event
Sometimes confounds the coward and the brave:
Nor virtue always meets the ſame ſucceſs.

LYCIDAS.

Why would'ſt thou ſeek to trouble me in vain
With thy perpetual doubts? So near the port
Would'ſt thou perſuade me ſtill to dread a ſtorm!
The man who blindly liſtens to thy fears,
Will doubt of morning light, or ev'ning ſhade.

The ſteed, approaching to the goal,
His eager courſe impatient ſpeeds;
No more obeys the rein's controul,
The chiding voice no longer heeds.
Thus, fill'd with hopes, th'exulting breaſt
No dread can know, no counſel hear;
But ſeems of preſent joy poſſeſt,
To think that happineſs is near.

SCENE IV.

A ſpacious country at the foot of a hill, covered over with paſtoral cottages. A bridge over the river ALPHEUS, *compoſed of trunks of trees. Between the trees, that grow upon the plain, is a proſpect of the City of* OLYMPIA *at a diſtance.*

ARGENE *in the dreſs of a Shepherdeſs, weaving garlands. Chorus of Nymphs and Shepherds, all buſied in paſtoral employments.*

CHORUS.

Hail! peaceful ſhades, dear pleaſing ſeat!
Hail happy freedom's ſure retreat!

ARGENE.

No fraud here lurks with foul deſign
Our pleaſures to deſtroy;
But conſtancy and love combine
To heighten ev'ry joy.

CHORUS.

Hail! peaceful ſhades, dear pleaſing ſeat!
Hail happy freedom's ſure retreat!

ARGENE.

ARGENE.

Here each of little ſtore poſſeſt,
Content with little lives;
Rich in himſelf, his tranquill breaſt
No poverty perceives.

CHORUS.

Hail! peaceful ſhades, dear pleaſing ſeat!
Hail happy freedom's ſure retreat!

ARGENE.

Without or guards or ſtrong-built hold,
Our peace is here ſecure;
No treaſur'd heaps of tempting gold
The midnight thief allure.

CHORUS.

Hail! peaceful ſhades, dear-pleaſing ſeat!
Hail happy freedom's ſure retreat!

ARGENE.

Here undiſguis'd the ſimple loves
Of nymphs———

No more——for Ariſtea comes. [*Riſing, the Nymphs and Shepherds go out.*

SCENE V.

ARGENE, ARISTEA *attended.*

ARISTEA.

Lycoris,
Purſue your harmleſs paſtime.

ARGENE.

Doſt thou, princeſs,
Return to bleſs again my poor abode?

ARISTEA.

O that I could as well avoid myſelf
As I can fly from others! Ah! my friend,
Thou little think'ſt how fatal is this day
To Ariſtea.

ARGENE.

Rather ſay this day
Is glorious to you! Of your matchleſs beauty
What ampler proofs can future times receive?
To win you all the flow'r of Greece this day
Meet in th' Olympic liſts.

ARISTEA.

He whom alone
I wiſh to find, alas! he is not there.

But let us change to ſome more pleaſing theme;
Again reſume your interrupted taſks:
Lycoris ſit, and let me hear thee ſpeak;
Thou didſt begin to tell me all thy fortunes;
Purſue the ſtory now; with thy lov'd converſe,
Aſſuage awhile my pains; and if thou canſt,
By telling thy afflictions, ſoften mine.

ARGENE.

If aught from me has pow'r to charm your grief,
Then are my ſuff'rings not without reward.
Already have I told you that my name
Is Argene, that Crete beheld me born
Of noble blood, that my affections ſoar'd
A higher flight than ev'n my birth could claim.

ARISTEA.

Thus far I've learnt.

ARGENE.

Hear whence my woes began:
On Lycidas, the princely heir of Crete,
I fix'd my love, and was again belov'd.
Awhile with prudence we conceal'd our flames:
Till paſſion ſtrength'ning, as it oft befalls,
And prudence growing weak, ſome watchful eye
Perceiv'd at length, and read our mutual glances:
The tale to others flew; from tongue to tongue

The rumour ſpreading reach'd the royal ear:
The king with anger heard, rebuk'd his ſon,
And ſternly bade him never ſee me more;
And thus by oppoſition but increas'd
His wiſh to ſee me; ſo the fanning wind
Adds ſtrength to flame; ſo rivers higher ſwell,
In ſtreighten'd bounds: impatient with his love
The frantic Lycidas reſolv'd to fly
And bear me thence by force; his whole deſign
To me he ſent, the meſſenger betray'd
His truſt, and gave the letters to the king.
My hapleſs lover then was cloſe confin'd,
And I commanded to a foreign huſband
To give my hand, which I refus'd t'obey:
Againſt me all declar'd; the monarch threaten'd,
My friends condemn'd me, and my father oft
Urg'd me t'accept the nuptials: nothing now
Could ſave me but determin'd flight or death:
Of theſe I choſe the firſt, which prudence ſeem'd
To point, and nature leaſt recoil'd to follow:
Unknown I came to Elis: in theſe woods
I purpos'd to reſide, 'midſt ſhepherds here
A rural nymph, I now am call'd Lycoris:
But in the faithful boſom of Lycoris,
I cheriſh ſtill the heart of Argene.

ARISTEA.

Indeed I pity thee; but cannot yet

Approve

Approve thy flight; a virgin and alone
To ſeek a diſtant country——to forſake——

ARGENE.

And ſhould I then have yielded up my hand
To Megacles?

ARISTEA.

To Megacles!——O Heav'n!
Declare what Megacles was this?

ARGENE.

The huſband
For whom the king deſign'd me: ought I then
To have forgotten———

ARISTEA.

Know'ſt thou not his country?

ARGENE.

Athens.

ARISTEA.

What cauſe had brought him into Crete?

ARGENE.

The cauſe was love; for ſo himſelf declar'd.
A band of robbers, at his firſt arrival,

Attack'd, and had depriv'd him of his life,
But Lycidas by chance came by and ſav'd him.
Since which they ſtill have liv'd in ſtricteſt friend-
ſhip:
This friend of Lycidas, known to the king,
Was, as a ſtranger, by the royal mandate
Decreed for me.

ARISTEA.

But doſt thou yet remember
His aſpect?

ARGENE.

Yes, methinks I ſee him preſent.
Fair were his ſhining locks, his eyebrows dark,
His lips of ruddieſt hue, and gently ſwelling;
His looks ſedate, and full of tenderneſs;
A frequent ſmile, a pleaſing ſpeech—but princeſs,
Your colour changes—ſay—what can this mean?

ARISTEA.

O Heav'n! that Megacles whom you deſcribe,
Is him I love.

ARGENE.

What ſay'ſt thou?

ARISTEA.

O! 'tis true:

In ſecret long he lov'd me; but my father
Refus'd my hand to one in Athens born:
Nay would not hear or ev'n vouchſafe to ſee him.
He left me in deſpair, and never ſince
Have I beheld him; but from thee I learn
What has befall'n him ſince.

ARGENE.

Our fortunes both
Are ſurely wond'rous.

ARISTEA.

Could he now be told
That here I'm made the prize of victory.

ARGENE.

Diſpatch ſome truſty meſſenger to Crete,
To give him notice: thou meantime, procure
The games to be delay'd.

ARISTEA.

Say how, my friend?

ARGENE.

Great Cliſthenes is Ariſtea's father;
'Tis he preſides, th' elected judge, to rule
The ſolemn rites; he if he will can change——

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

But, ah! he will not.

ARGENE.

Yet, what harm, my princeſs,
Springs from the trial?

ARISTEA.

Haſte then, let us go
And find out Cliſthenes.

ARGENE.

Forbear——He's here.

SCENE VI.

ARGENE, ARISTEA, CLISTHENES *attended.*

CLISTHENES.

My daughter, ev'ry thing is now prepar'd;
The names are gather'd, and the victims ſlain,
The hour of combat fix'd; nor can we longer
Defer the games without offending Heav'n,
The faith of nations, and thy father's honour.

ARISTEA.

Fond hopes, farewell!

CLISTHENES.

O! I ſhould give thee cauſe
For pride indeed, did I diſcloſe the rivals
That ſeek to combat for thy ſake: Olinthus
From Megara; Clearchus comes from Sparta;
Thebes ſends her Atys; Corynth Erylus;
And Crete's fam'd iſle the youthful Lycidas.

ARGENE.

Who?

CLISTHENES.

Lycidas, the Cretan monarch's ſon.

ARISTEA.

Does he too ſeek me?

CLISTHENES.

Yes; he comes to prove
His fate with others.

ARGENE.

Has he then ſo ſoon
Forgot his once lov'd Argene? [*Aſide.*]

CLISTHENES.

My daughter,
Let us be gone.

ARISTEA.

Grant my requeſt, my father,
Delay the combat for awhile.

CLISTHENES.

Impoſſible!
But wherefore ſhould'ſt thou aſk it? What can urge
This ſtrange deſire?

ARISTEA.

'Tis ever time enough
To barter freedom: marriage to our ſex
Is but a galling yoke; and ſure we ſuffer
Enough of evil in our ſervile ſtate,
Without the nuptial tie.

CLISTHENES.

Such is the language
Of womankind; but falſely they complain.

No longer murmur that your fate
Ungently dooms you to obey;
Since ev'n in your ſubjected ſtate
You o'er us rule with ſov'reign ſway.
While we in fortitude tranſcend,
You boaſt reſiſtleſs beauty's arms:
In vain would feeble man contend;
For courage yields to female charms.

SCENE VII.

ARGENE, ARISTEA.

ARGENE.

And didſt thou, princeſs, hear?

ARISTEA.

My friend, farewell!
I muſt attend my father: thou who know'ſt
Of my dear Megacles, O if thy heart
Be gentle as thy looks, in kind compaſſion
Procure me tidings of the man I love.

Ah! ſeek to know what land detains
The object of my care:
If ſtill his breaſt unchang'd remains,
If I his converſe ſhare.
Enquire if e'er he gently ſighs
At mention of my name;
If e'er, when tender paſſions riſe,
His lips his thoughts proclaim.

SCENE

SCENE VIII.

ARGENE *alone.*

Has then ungrateful Lycidas ſo ſoon
Forgot his vows? Unhappy Argene!
To what have thy offended ſtars reſerv'd thee!
Learn, unexperienc'd virgins, learn from me:
Behold the practice of deceitful men!
Each calls you ſtill his life, his ſoul, his treaſure;
Each ſwears the dear remembrance of your charms
Beguiles the day, and waſtes the midnight hours:
All arts are theirs: they can turn pale and weep,
Before your ſight ſeem ready to expire:
But heed them not——they are diſſemblers all.

Amidſt a thouſand hope not e'er
One heart ſincere to find;
Tho' each in preſence of the fair
May boaſt a conſtant mind.
By cuſtom now is grown deſpis'd,
The faithful lover's name;
And conſtancy, that once was priz'd,
Is made the lover's ſhame.

SCENE

SCENE IX.

LYCIDAS, MEGACLES *meeting.*

MEGACLES.

My Lycidas!

LYCIDAS.

My friend!

MEGACLES.

Behold me here——

LYCIDAS.

Haſt thou compleated——

MEGACLES.

Ev'ry thing is done.
I, in thy ſtead, have viſited the temple,
And, in thy place, ſhall ſoon begin the trial;
Then, ere the ſignal for the ſtrife is giv'n,
Thou may'ſt diſcloſe the bent of thy deſign.

LYCIDAS.

O! ſhould'ſt thou conquer, all the realm of Love
Has not a lover happier than myſelf.

MEGACLES.

MEGACLES.

What mean'ſt thou?

LYCIDAS.

To reward the victor's toils
A maid is promis'd of tranſcendent charms,
And royal birth: theſe eyes had ſcarce beheld her
When my heart glow'd, and panted to poſſeſs her:
But little vers'd in theſe athletic games———

MEGACLES.

I underſtand you——I for you muſt win her.

LYCIDAS.

Ev'n ſo, my friend—demand my life, my kingdom,
Whate'er I have, my Megacles, is thine,
And all too little to return thy friendſhip.

MEGACLES.

There need not, prince, ſuch motives to incite
A grateful vaſſal, and a faithful friend:
To thee I owe my life; then hope the beſt;
I truſt thou ſhalt poſſeſs thy wiſh'd-for bride.
I come not unexperienc'd here; ere this
My labours have bedew'd the ſands of Elis:
Nor is the ſylvan olive to theſe brows
An unaccuſtom'd wreath; and never yet

This

This breaſt was more ſecure of victory:
The thirſt of honour, and the warmth of friendſhip,
Add ſtrength to ev'ry nerve: I pant with ardor,
And ſeem already in the glorious liſt.
Methinks I ſee each rival combatant,
Methinks I conquer! From the trampled field
My locks and face with duſt are cover'd o'er,
And ſhouts of pleas'd ſpectators fill my ears.

LYCIDAS.

O my lov'd friend! O deareſt Ariſtea!

MEGACLES.

What ſay'ſt thou, ha!

LYCIDAS.

I call by name on her
My ſoul adores.

MEGACLES.

And nam'ſt thou Ariſtea?

LYCIDAS.

I do.

MEGACLES.

What Ariſtea?

LYCIDAS.

Ariſtea,
Born on Aſopus' banks, the only off-ſpring
Of royal Cliſthenes.

MEGACLES.

O Heav'n! 'tis ſhe,
'Tis ſhe I love! [*Aſide.*]——And muſt we fight for her?

LYCIDAS.

For her.

MEGACLES.

Is this the virgin I muſt gain you,
By conqu'ring here?

LYCIDAS.

The ſame.

MEGACLES.

Is Ariſtea
Your hope, your comfort?

LYCIDAS.

O! ſhe's all to me.

MEGACLES.

MEGACLES.

I feel the ſtroke of death! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

Be not ſurpriz'd:
When thou ſhalt ſee the beauties of that face,
Thou wilt perhaps excuſe me: Gods themſelves
Without a bluſh might own a paſſion there.

MEGACLES.

Too well I know it. [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

Should'ſt thou prove victorious,
Can there be found one happier than myſelf?
Ev'n Megacles ſhall triumph in my joy:
Wilt thou not ſympathize in my delight?

MEGACLES.

Doubtleſs.

LYCIDAS.

And wilt thou not, my friend, eſteem
The moment bleſt that gives me Ariſtea?

MEGACLES.

Moſt bleſt——O Gods! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

And will not Megacles
Grace with his preſence theſe auſpicious nuptials?

MEGACLES.

Diſtraction! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

Speak.

MEGACLES.

I have no will but yours.
What unknown miſery, what hell is this! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

How tedious ſeems the day! Alas! thou know'ſt not,
Or can'ſt not ſure believe, that expectation
Is death to one who loves, and loves like me.

MEGACLES.

I know it well.

LYCIDAS.

Yes, Megacles, ev'n now
My thoughts call up futurity: already
In fancy I poſſeſs my beauteous bride.

MEGACLES.

MEGACLES.

This is too much. [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

Methinks I ſeem——

MEGACLES.

No more——
You've ſaid enough; I own the name of friend,
And know the duties which that name implies:
Yet think not therefore——

LYCIDAS.

Why are you diſpleas'd?
In what have I offended?

MEGACLES.

Inconſid'rate!
What have I done!——[*Aſide.*] This tranſport ſprings from zeal
To do you ſervice: hither am I come
Tir'd with a length of way, the fight draws near,
But little time remains for my repoſe,
And of that little you would now deprive me.

LYCIDAS.

What hinder'd thee before to ſpeak thy thoughts?

MEGACLES.

Reſpect reſtrain'd my tongue.

LYCIDAS.

Then would'ſt thou reſt?

MEGACLES.

I would.

LYCIDAS.

Shall we from hence retire together?

MEGACLES.

No, Lycidas.

LYCIDAS.

Then wilt thou ſtill remain
Beneath theſe ſhades?

MEGACLES.

I will.

LYCIDAS.

Shall not thy friend
Attend thee here?

MEGACLES.

O no. [*Impatiently.*

LYCIDAS.

What can this mean! [*Aſide.*]
Farewell, and may'ſt thou find thy wiſh'd repoſe!

Still while you ſleep, with pleaſing themes
May Love inſpire your peaceful dreams,
And whiſper how I'm bleſt!
May yonder ſtream more ſilent flow,
And ev'ry zephyr gentler blow,
To ſoothe my friend to reſt.

SCENE X.

MEGACLES *alone.*

Ye gracious pow'rs! What tidings have I heard?
What unexpected ſtroke is fall'n upon me!
Shall ſhe I love become another's right,
And I reſign her to my rival's arms?
But, O! that rival is my deareſt friend!
How ſtrangely for my torment fate unites
Two names ſo oppoſite! Yet ſure the laws
Of friendſhip never can exact ſo much;
Forgive me, prince, I am a lover too;
To aſk me to reſign my Ariſtea,
Is but to aſk my life——And does not then
This life belong to Lycidas who ſav'd it?

Do I not breathe thro' him? And canſt thou doubt,
Ungrateful Megacles! Should Ariſtea
E'er know thee thus forgetful of thy friendſhip,
Ev'n ſhe might juſtly hate thee: never, never
Shall ſhe be witneſs to this change——the laws
Of faith and amity alone I'll hear,
Of gratitude and honour. All I dread
Is to behold her; let me ſhun th' encounter;
How ſhall I meet her ſight! To think of it
My heart beats quick, cold ſweats bedew my face,
I tremble, I'm confus'd——I cannot bear it.

SCENE XI.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

Stranger. [*Without ſeeing his face.*

MEGACLES.

Ha! who is this that breaks upon me?
[*Turning.*

ARISTEA.

O Heav'n! [*Sees* Megacles.

MEGACLES.

O Gods! [*Sees* Ariſtea.

ARISTEA.

My Megacles! My life!
And is it thee, do I again behold thee!
Ye pow'rs! I faint with joy, my tender breaſt
Can ſcarce ſupport this mighty tide of pleaſure.
Thou deareſt object of my conſtant wiſhes,
So long bewail'd, ſo long invok'd in vain!
At length thou hear'ſt thy faithful Ariſtea;
Thou art return'd in a propitious hour;
O happy ſuff'rings! O indulgent love!
My ſighs and tears are amply now repaid.

MEGACLES.

How cruel is my fate! [*Aſide.*]

ARISTEA.

Thou anſwer'ſt not,
My much lov'd Megacles! Still art thou ſilent!
Why does thy colour change? What mean thoſe looks
Confus'd? Why ſeem thy eyes to ſhun me thus?
Whence is that ſtarting tear? Perhaps, alas!
No longer I poſſeſs thy love——perhaps——

MEGACLES.

What ſay'ſt thou!—Ever ſtill—know then, I am—
I cannot ſpeak---How dreadful is my fate! [*Aſide.*]

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

Thou chill'ſt me to the ſoul: and know'ſt thou not
That here for me the combatants contend?

MEGACLES.

I know it well.

ARISTEA.

And com'ſt not thou to enter
The liſts for Ariſtea's ſake?

MEGACLES.

I do.

ARISTEA.

Why are you then ſo ſad?

MEGACLES.

Becauſe——O Gods!
What torment equals mine!

ARISTEA.

I underſtand thee:
Some envious tongue has made thee doubt my truth:
If this afflicts thee, thou'rt indeed unjuſt;
For never, Megacles, ſince laſt we parted,
Have I ev'n ſinn'd in thought againſt my love.

Thy

Thy voice has ſeem'd for ever in my ears;
My lips have dwelt for ever on thy name;
My heart retain'd thy image: never yet
I've felt a ſecond flame: thy Ariſtea——

MEGACLES.

Enough——I know it well——

ARISTEA.

Thy Ariſtea,
Shall ſooner die than for a ſingle moment
Forego her plighted faith.

MEGACLES.

Diſtracting thought! [*Aſide.*]

ARISTEA.

But look upon me——ſpeak——

MEGACLES.

What can I ſay?

SCENE

SCENE XII.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA, ALCANDER *in haſte.*

ALCANDER.

My lord, diſpatch, if here you come to fight;
The ſignal's giv'n, that to the glorious trial
Invites the combatants.

SCENE XIII.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA.

MEGACLES.

Aſſiſt me Gods!
Farewell, my love!

ARISTEA.

And wilt thou leave me thus?
Yet go——return my huſband; I forgive thee.

MEGACLES.

Such happineſs is not reſerv'd for me. [*Going.*

ARISTEA.

Hear me, doſt thou ſtill love me?

MEGACLES.

MEGACLES.

More than life.

ARISTEA.

Doſt thou believe me true?

MEGACLES.

Thy truth I think
Unſully'd as thy beauty.

ARISTEA.

Go'ſt thou not
To conquer, and to win me?

MEGACLES.

I would hope it.

ARISTEA.

And doſt thou ſtill poſſeſs thy wonted valour?

MEGACLES.

I truſt, I do.

ARISTEA.

And thou wilt gain the prize?

MEGACLES.

I hope for victory.

ARISTEA.

Then am not I,
Dear Megacles, thy ſpouſe?

MEGACLES.

My life, adieu.

In thy future happy days,
Think on him who lov'd ſo well,

ARISTEA.

Tell me what thy grief can raiſe,
Tell me, love, thy conſort tell.

MEGACLES.

Ceaſe, ceaſe, thou idol of my heart.

ARISTEA.

Speak, Megacles, thy thoughts diſcloſe.

BOTH.

Alas! by ſpeaking } you impart
Alas! by ſilence }
New troubles that increaſe my woes.

ARISTEA,

ARISTEA.

While thus I ſee my lover mourn,
In vain the cauſe I ſeek.

MEGACLES.

With jealouſy, I rage, I burn,
Yet, ah! I dare not ſpeak.

BOTH.

What hearts could e'er before ſuſtain
Such fatal grief, ſuch cruel pain!

ACT II. SCENE I.

ARISTEA, ARGENE.

ARGENE.

No tidings of the combat yet arriv'd?

ARISTEA.

No, beauteous Argene: the law is hard
That ſuffers not our ſex to be ſpectators.

ARGENE.

Alas! 'twere greater pain, perhaps, to ſee
The man we love expos'd in ſuch a conflict,
Nor have it in our pow'r to give him ſuccour,
Yet to be preſent———

ARISTEA.

I methinks am preſent
Tho' abſent far: ev'n now my lab'ring mind
Forms things that are not. Could'ſt thou ſee this heart;
The combat's here, my friend, here, here it rages
More than in yonder field: before my eyes
I ſee the liſts, I ſee my Megacles,
The judges and contending combatants:
Imagination

Imagination paints his rivals ſtronger,
His judges partial: doubly in my ſoul
I feel whate'er he feels: the cruel blows,
The threats, th' inſulting ſhouts——O! were I preſent,
I ſhould but fear the truth; while thus I'm abſent,
My anxious thoughts create a thouſand dangers,
And what is not, and is, alike I fear.

ARGENE.

No meſſenger as yet appears——[*looking out.*

ARISTEA.

None yet——
O Heav'n!

ARGENE.

What can this mean?

ARISTEA.

Alas! I doubt!
How my heart trembles!

ARGENE.

Whence this mighty tumult?

ARISTEA.

My fate's decided——See, Alcander comes.

ARGENE.

O! haſte Alcander, haſte to give us comfort;
What news?

SCENE II.

ARISTEA, ARGENE, ALCANDER.

ALCANDER.

Moſt fortunate! The king, O princeſs!
Sends me to you the harbinger of joy.
And I——

ARISTEA.

Are the games finiſh'd?

ALCANDER.

Yes; they are.

ARGENE.

Declare the victor.

ALCANDER.

I'll relate the whole:
Already now th' impatient gazing crowd——

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

All this I aſk not.

ALCANDER.

Let me yet relate——

ARISTEA.

Say, who has conquer'd?

ALCANDER.

Lycidas has conquer'd.

ARISTEA.

Ha! Lycidas!

ALCANDER.

The ſame.

ARGENE.

The prince of Crete?

ALCANDER.

Yes, he who lately landed on theſe ſhores.

ARISTEA.

Ill fated Ariſtea! [*Aſide.*]

ARGENE.

Wretched Argene! [*Aſide.*]

ALCANDER.

Moſt happy princeſs! What a noble conſort
Has fate allotted thee!

ARISTEA.

Alcander, leave us.

ALCANDER.

The king expects you.

ARISTEA.

Leave us——I will follow.

ALCANDER.

He waits your coming in the ſacred temple,
Where now aſſembled———

ARISTEA.

Wherefore go'ſt thou not?

ALCANDER.

Is this the recompenſe my tidings find? [*Aſide.*]

SCENE

SCENE III.

ARISTEA, ARGENE.

ARGENE.

Ah! tell me, princeſs, is there under Heav'n
One, O ye pow'rs! more hopeleſs than myſelf?

ARISTEA.

Yes, Argene, that wretch am I!

ARGENE.

O never
May love on thee inflict the pangs I feel!
Thou know'ſt not what I've loſt; how dear that heart
Had coſt me, which thou now haſt raviſh'd from me.

ARISTEA.

Nor canſt thou judge the torments I endure.

I grant the ſuff'rings great you prove,
You loſe the object of your love;
But yet may freely vent your grief,
And ſeek from pity ſome relief:
While I, by ruthleſs fortune croſt,
Behold myſelf and lover loſt;
Yet cannot, midſt my woes, retain
The wretched freedom to complain.

SCENE IV.

ARGENE, AMYNTAS.

ARGENE.

And muſt I neither pity find nor ſuccour?

AMYNTAS.

Almighty pow'rs! Sure Argene appears
In yonder form!

ARGENE.

At leaſt revenge, revenge
May be procur'd. [*Going.*

AMYNTAS.

Thou, Argene, in Elis!
Why here, and here alone in homely weeds?

ARGENE.

Art thou too come t'aſſiſt the black deſigns
Of thy perfidious prince? The Cretan king
Has doubtleſs to a ſage conductor giv'n
The care of Lycidas! Behold the fruit
Of thy inſtructions! Glory then, Amyntas,
To ſee thy pains ſucceed: who ſeeks at full
To know the tiller's care, muſt mark the ſoil.

AMYNTAS.

AMYNTAS.

Already has ſhe heard—[*Aſide.*] Not my advice—

ARGENE.

Enough—no more—In Heav'n there ſtill is juſtice
For all, and may ſometimes be found on earth:
I will implore it both from men and Gods;
My rage ſhall, like his falſehood, keep no bounds:
To Cliſthenes, to Greece, to all the world
I'll publiſh he's a traitor: infamy
Shall ſtill purſue his ſteps, that ev'ry one
May hate, may ſhun him, and with juſt abhorrence
May point him out to all that know him not.

AMYNTAS.

Theſe thoughts are ſure unworthy Argene:
Anger, tho' juſt, is yet a treach'rous guide.
Were I as thee I'd prove more gentle methods;
Contrive that he may ſee thee, ſpeak to him,
Recall his promiſes to his remembrance;
'Tis ever better to regain a lover,
Than to ſubdue a foe.

ARGENE.

And doſt thou think
That e'er Amyntas he'll return to me?

AMYNTAS.

I hope at leaſt——thou wert his only joy,
For thee he languiſh'd, dy'd for thee; remember,
Has he not vow'd a thouſand times———

ARGENE.

Remember!
I for my ſorrow recollect it all.

What ſaid he not one fatal day?
What God did not atteſt?
And can he then, ye pow'rs, betray
The faith he once profeſs'd?
For him I ev'ry bleſſing ſpurn,
Yet now he flies my ſight;
And wilt thou, love, with this return,
A conſtant heart requite?

SCENE V.

AMYNTAS *alone.*

Unthinking ſtate of youth! when I behold thee
Expos'd to ev'ry giddy change of love,
I find new comfort in the calm of years.
'Tis ever grateful from the ſhore to view
The diſtant wreck; not that we take delight

In

In other's woe, but that the mind with pleaſure
Contemplates ills from which ourſelves are free.
Yet hold——and has not hoary age its ſtorms?
Alas! too many; nor is ev'n exempt
From dread of others: tho' the name may change,
Folly is folly ſtill; each age is rul'd
By love or hate, by anger or deſire.

We're veſſels left to wander wide
Amidſt a rough and ſtormy tide;
Our furious paſſions that prevail,
Are dang'rous winds that ſwell the ſail;
Our life's the ſea on which we ſteer,
And pleaſure is the rock we fear.

Tho' like a wary pilot now
Her watchful ſtation reaſon keeps;
Yet ſoon the waves may ſtronger grow,
And whirl us headlong o'er the deeps.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

CLISTHENES *preceeded by* LYCIDAS, ALCANDER, *and* MEGACLES *with an olive crown. Chorus of Wreſtlers,* GUARDS *and* PEOPLE.

CHORUS.

Than Lycidas a nobler name
For fortitude renown'd,
Along the margin of his ſtream
Did Alpheus ne'er reſound.

CHORUS. PART I.

No hero e'er more bravely ſtood,
In combat hand to hand;
No mightier labours e'er bedew'd
The fam'd Olympic ſand.

CHORUS. PART II.

Great Pallas' arts are his in fight,
The wings of love in ſpeed;
Not Phœbus' or Alcides' might
Could Lycidas exceed.

CHORUS.

Such worth, ſuch val'rous deeds diſplay'd,
For ages ſhall endure:
No time with deep oblivion's ſhade
Such honours ſhall obſcure.

CLISTHENES.

Brave youth! who 'midſt thy glory ſtill retain'ſt
Thy graceful modeſty; permit me now
To preſs thee thus with fondneſs to my boſom,
O happy king of Crete! who could give birth
To ſuch a ſon as thee! O had I ſtill
Preſerv'd my ſon Philinthus, he perhaps
Had been like this—[*To* Alcander.] Alcander thou
remember'ſt
With what affliction I conſign'd him to thee;
But yet———

ALCANDER.

It now avails not to revive
Misfortunes paſt.

CLISTHENES.

'Tis true——My Ariſtea
[*To* Megacles.
Shall recompenſe thy worth: if Cliſthenes
Has aught beſides to give, demand it freely:
Thou canſt not aſk what I'd refuſe to grant.

MEGACLES.

Be firm, my heart!—[*Aſide.*] My lord, I am a ſon,
And have a tender father; ev'ry pleaſure
I ſhare not with him loſes half its worth:
I would be firſt to bear the tidings to him

Of all that has befall'n me; I would aſk
The ſanction of his will for my eſpouſals;
And in his preſence give my hand in Crete
To Ariſtea.

CLISTHENES.

Thy deſire is juſt.

MEGACLES.

With your permiſſion I will now depart:
But, in my ſtead, I leave this friend behind
The guardian and conductor of my bride.
[*Preſenting* Lycidas.

CLISTHENES.

What can thoſe features mean? While I behold them,
A ſtrange emotion runs thro' ev'ry vein! [*Aſide.*]
Declare, what youth is this.

MEGACLES.

His name's Egyſthus;
His country Crete; he to the royal blood
Is near ally'd; but friendſhip more than blood
Unites our ſouls; ſo equal are our thoughts,
In ev'ry grief or joy alike we ſhare,
And naming Lycidas you name Egyſthus.

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

Ingenious friendſhip! [*Aſide.*]

CLISTHENES.

Let Egyſthus then
Conduct thy ſpouſe: but ſurely Lycidas
Will not depart without one interview.

MEGACLES.

O no——this meeting muſt be dreadful to me,
For parting would be death: I feel already
The pangs of ſuff'ring——

CLISTHENES.

Ariſtea's here.

MEGACLES.

Unhappy me! [*Aſide.*]

SCENE VII.

CLISTHENES, LYCIDAS, ALCANDER, MEGACLES, ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

To theſe deteſted nuptials
I come, ev'n as a victim to the altar. [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

Thoſe heav'nly charms will ſoon be mine for ever!
[*Aſide.*]

CLISTHENES.

Draw near, my daughter: look, behold thy huſband.
[*Preſenting* Megacles.

MEGACLES.

Ah! were it ſo! [*Aſide.*]

ARISTEA.

My huſband! [*Sees* Megacles.

CLISTHENES.

Yes; confeſs
A fairer tie was never form'd by Heav'n.

ARISTEA.

If Lycidas has conquer'd, can my love——
My father's ſure deceiv'd. [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

She thinks her huſband
Is Lycidas, and hence her trouble ſprings. [*Aſide.*]

ARISTEA.

Is this the victor, father?

CLISTHENES.

Canſt thou aſk it?
Doſt thou not know him by his looks? His face
Beſmear'd with duſt, bedew'd with honour'd toils?
That leafy wreath, the glorious ornament
Of him who triumphs?

ARISTEA.

Said'ſt thou not, Alcander—

ALCANDER.

I ſaid the truth, O princeſs!

CLISTHENES.

Doubt no longer:
Behold the ſpouſe to whom thou'rt join'd by Heav'n;
And never could a father's love obtain
A nobler from th' indulgent Gods.

ARISTEA.

O tranſport! [*Aſide.*]

MEGACLES.

O torture! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

Happy day! [*Aſide.*]

CLISTHENES.

CLISTHENES.

What! neither ſpeak!
Whence is this ſilence?

MEGACLES.

Heav'ns!—What ſhall I ſay!

ARISTEA.

Fain would I ſpeak but——

CLISTHENES.

Well I underſtand thee,
My preſence is ungrateful: majeſty,
The ſtern demeanour of the king and father,
Accords but ill with love. I know how irkſome
To me were ſuch reſtraints: remain together,
I praiſe the modeſty that keeps you thus
In mutual ſilence.

MEGACLES.

Still my fate's more wretched! [*Aſide.*]

CLISTHENES.

CLISTHENES.

I know that Love's a boy, and flies
The converſe of the grave and wiſe;
Delights in gameſome toys, but fears
The rigid frowns of hoary years:
For diſtant awe can ne'er agree
With frolick mirth and liberty.

SCENE VIII.

ARISTEA, MEGACLES, LYCIDAS.

MEGACLES.

O whither ſhall I turn, divided thus
Between my friend and love! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

'Tis time I now
Reveal myſelf to Ariſtea. [*To* Megacles.

MEGACLES.

Stay——— [*To him.*
O Heav'n! [*Aſide.*]

ARISTEA.

My lord, my huſband, from thy wife
Conceal thy grief no longer.

MEGACLES.

Cruel fate! [*Aſide.*]

LYCIDAS.

My friend, my love admits no more delay.
[*To* Megacles *aſide.*

ARISTEA.

Thy ſilence, deareſt Megacles, diſtracts me.

MEGACLES.

Yet hold, my heart; compleat thy ſacrifice: [*Aſide.*
Vouchſafe, O prince! one moment to retire.
[*To* Lycidas.

LYCIDAS.

Retire! Say, wherefore———

MEGACLES.

Go: confide in me.
I muſt diſcloſe the whole to Ariſtea.

LYCIDAS.

But may not I be preſent?

MEGACLES.

No: this converſe
Imports far more than thou may'ſt think——

LYCIDAS.

'Tis well;
Thou bid'ſt and I obey: I'll not be far,
An inſtant may recall me——Think, my friend,
For what, for whom thou ſpeak'ſt: if Lycidas
Has e'er deſerv'd thy gratitude and love,
Now prove it; to thy faithful aid I truſt
My peace, my life.

SCENE IX.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA.

MEGACLES.

O cruel recollection!

ARISTEA.

At length we are alone, and I may now,
Without conſtraint, give vent to joy; may call thee
My hope, my treaſure, my delight——

MEGACLES.

No, princeſs;
Thoſe rapt'rous names are not for me: reſerve them
To grace a happier lover.

ARISTEA.

And is this
A time for ſuch diſcourſe? this happy day——
But thoughtleſs as I am thou doſt but mock me;
I am to blame to be alarm'd.

MEGACLES.

Alas!
Thou haſt but too much cauſe——

ARISTEA.

Explain thyſelf.

MEGACLES.

Hear then; but rouze thy courage, Ariſtea:
Prepare thy ſoul to give th' extremeſt proof
Of dauntleſs virtue.

ARISTEA.

Speak, what would'ſt thou ſay?
How my heart ſhudders!

MEGACLES.

Haſt thou not declar'd
A thouſand times, 'twas not my form that won thee,
But that ſincerity, that grateful mind,
That ſoul of honour which inſpir'd my thoughts?

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

Moſt true indeed: ſuch didſt thou ſeem to me;
As ſuch I know thee yet, as ſuch adore thee.

MEGACLES.

Should Megacles e'er change from what thou knew'ſt him,
Be falſe to friendſhip, perjur'd to the Gods,
Forget the benefits conferr'd upon him,
And give him death to whom he owes his life;
Say, couldſt thou love him ſtill? permit him ſtill
To woo thee, or receive him for thy huſband?

ARISTEA.

And doſt thou think that I can e'er ſuppoſe
My Megacles ſo loſt to ev'ry virtue?

MEGACLES.

Know then, by fate's decree, that Megacles
Muſt be this wretch if e'er he proves thy huſband.

ARISTEA.

What haſt thou ſaid?

MEGACLES.

Now hear the fatal ſecret.
The prince of Crete, who languiſh'd for thy charms,

Implor'd my pity; 'twas to him I ow'd
My life preſerv'd: ah! princeſs, judge thyſelf,
Could I refuſe——

ARISTEA.

And thou haſt fought——

MEGACLES.

For him.

ARISTEA.

And wilt thou loſe me thus?

MEGACLES.

Yes, to maintain
Myſelf ſtill worthy of thee.

ARISTEA.

Muſt I then——

MEGACLES.

Thou muſt compleat my taſk: O Ariſtea!
Confirm the dictates of a grateful heart.
Yes, gen'rous maid, let Lycidas henceforth
Be what till now thy Megacles has been;
To him transfer thy love; my friend deſerves
This happineſs: I live within his breaſt;
Nor can I deem thee loſt if he has gain'd thee.

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

Diſtracting change! I fall from higheſt Heav'n
To deepeſt Hell——A paſſion, pure as mine,
Deſerves a better fate——Alas! without thee
Life is not life!

MEGACLES.

O beauteous Ariſtea!
Do not thou too conſpire againſt my virtue;
Already has it coſt me dear to form
This dreadful reſolution: one ſoft moment
Deſtroys the glorious work.

ARISTEA.

To leave me thus——

MEGACLES.

I have reſolv'd.

ARISTEA.

Haſt thou reſolv'd? And when?

MEGACLES.

This is the laſt——How ſhall I live to ſpeak it?
This is the laſt farewell.

ARISTEA.

The laſt!——Ingrate!

Aſſiſt me, Heav'n! my feet begin to fail;
Cold damps bedew my face; methinks I feel
The freezing hand of death upon my heart.
[*leans againſt a tree.*

MEGACLES.

My boaſted fortitude decays apace;
The longer I remain, the leſs I find
The pow'r to part——Rouze, rouze, my ſoul!—
I go——
O! Ariſtea, live in peace.

ARISTEA.

What ſay'ſt thou?
Wilt thou then leave me?

MEGACLES.

Fate, my Ariſtea,
Demands this ſeparation.

ARISTEA.

And thou go'ſt——

MEGACLES.

Yes, never to return. [*Going.*

ARISTEA.

Hear me——Ah no!——
Say, whither go'ſt thou?

MEGACLES.

Far from thee, my love,
To breathe in other climes. [*Going, he ſtops at the entrance.*

ARISTEA.

O help!——I faint——
[*Falls in a ſwoon upon a rock.*

MEGACLES.

Unhappy Megacles! what do I ſee?
Her ſpirits ſink with grief; my only joy,
[*Returning.*
My Ariſtea, droop not thus: behold
Thy Megacles is here——I will not go——
Thou ſhalt be yet——What have I ſaid? Alas!
She hears me not: and have ye, cruel ſtars,
More mis'ry for me? No; there reſts but this,
This only to ſuſtain! Where ſhall I find
A friend to counſel? What muſt I reſolve?
To leave her thus were cruel tyranny!
But what avails my ſtay? Shall I eſpouſe her,
Deceive the king, betray my friend? O! never:
Honour and friendſhip both forbid the thought:
Yet may I not at leaſt defer this parting?
Alas! my reſolution then muſt meet
A ſecond ſeparation: Cruelty

Is mercy now——Farewell, my life! Farewell,
My dear loſt hope! On thee may Heav'n beſtow
The peace deny'd to me——[*Kiſſes her hand.*]——
Almighty Pow'rs!
Preſerve this beauteous frame, and add to her's
The days that I may loſe!—What Lycidas!
Where art thou Lycidas? [*Looking out.*

SCENE X.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA, LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

Has Ariſtea
Been told of all?

MEGACLES.

She has---Make haſte, O prince!
Aſſiſt thy ſpouſe. [*Going.*

LYCIDAS.

Ye pow'rs! What do I ſee?
What can this mean! [*To* Megacles.

MEGACLES.

Some unforeſeen diſorder
Has overcome her ſenſes. [*Going.*

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

Doſt thou leave me?

MEGACLES.

I go——but O! remember Ariſtea! [*To* Lycidas.
What will ſhe ſay on her returning ſenſe!
Methinks I know it all!—[*Aſide.*] Hear, Lycidas!

O! ſhould ſhe ſeek, or aſk thee where
Thy hapleſs friend is fled;
Return this anſwer to the fair:
My hapleſs friend is dead.

Yet, ah! let not ſuch grief torment
The tender mourner's breaſt:
Reply but this: from hence he went,
With anguiſh ſore oppreſt.

What deep abyſs of woe is mine!
From her I love to part!
And thus for ever to reſign
The treaſure of my heart!

SCENE

SCENE XI.

LYCIDAS, ARISTEA.

LYCIDAS.

What labyrinth is this in which I'm loſt!
See Ariſtea ſenſeleſs! Megacles
Departs afflicted——

ARISTEA.

O ye pow'rs! [*Coming to herſelf.*

LYCIDAS.

But look!
Her gentle ſoul reſumes its wonted functions:
My love, my princeſs! once again uncloſe
Thoſe beauteous eyes.

ARISTEA.

Ah! faithleſs, faithleſs huſband!
[*Not ſeeing him.*

LYCIDAS.

Call me not thus; but here receive my hand,
A pledge of conſtancy. [*Takes her hand.*

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

At leaſt--O Heav'ns! *Sees him.*
Where, where is Megacles?

LYCIDAS.

He's gone!

ARISTEA.

Ingrate!
Is he then gone! Had he the heart to leave me
In ſuch a cruel ſtate?

LYCIDAS.

Thy huſband's here.

ARISTEA.

Is then humanity, faith, love, compaſſion,
[*Riſing in a rage.*
Baniſh'd from ev'ry breaſt! If ſwift-wing'd juſtice
Conſume not ſuch offenders, why, ye Pow'rs!
Why are there bolts in Heav'n?

LYCIDAS.

I'm all amazement!
Say, who has wrong'd thee? Doſt thou ſeek revenge?
Speak, ſpeak, my love! Behold thy huſband preſent,
Behold thy Lycidas!

ARISTEA.

O Gods! art thou,
Art thou that Lycidas? Fly hence, be gone!
Avoid my ſight! It is thro' thee, perfidious,
I ſuffer all this wretchedneſs!

LYCIDAS.

What crime
Have I, unknown, committed?—I'm diſtracted!

ARISTEA.

Barbarian! 'tis by thee I'm ſlain;
By thee I from myſelf am torn:
Thro' thee this anguiſh I ſuſtain,
Thro' thee forſaken and forlorn!

Ne'er hope from me thy peace to find;
That treach'rous boſom I deſpiſe:
Thy ſoul is hateful to my mind;
Thy looks are poiſon to my eyes!

SCENE

SCENE XII.

LYCIDAS, ARGENE.

LYCIDAS.

And am I this barbarian, this perfidious!
Ye pow'rs!——I'll follow her, and know the cauſe
Of this myſterious chiding.

ARGENE.

Traitor, ſtay!

LYCIDAS.

Ha! do I dream or wake! [*Sees* Argene.

ARGENE.

Thou doſt not dream;
O no! thou ſeeſt forſaken Argene;
Ungrateful man! behold theſe features, once
Thy ſole delight, if midſt my paſt misfortunes
A trace remains of what they once have been.

LYCIDAS.

Whence could ſhe come? In what a luckleſs hour
Am I ſurpriz'd? If ſtill I loiter here
I loſe my Ariſtea. [*Aſide.*]——[*To her.*] Beauteous maid!
I underſtand

I underſtand not what thy words import;
Some other time thou may'ſt at better leiſure
Explain thy meaning. [*Going.*

ARGENE.

Hear me, cruel man!
[*Holding him.*

LYCIDAS.

Unhappy me! [*Aſide.*]

ARGENE.

Doſt thou not underſtand me?
But well I underſtand thy perfidy,
Thy new affection! All thy frauds I know;
And Cliſthenes from me ſhall know them all,
To thy confuſion. [*Going.*

LYCIDAS.

O forbear! Yet hear me;
[*Holding her.*]
Be not offended, Argene: forgive
This ſeeming coldneſs: I remember now
My former love, and if thou wilt conceal me,
Perhaps——who knows th' event?

ARGENE.

And can I ſuffer
A baſer inſult? Say'ſt thou then, perhaps——

Who knows th' event? Yes, yes, 'tis I am guilty:
The motives thou haſt urg'd to plead thy pardon,
Are doubtleſs mighty proofs of thy affection.

LYCIDAS.

Yet hear what I would ſay. [*Offers to take her hand.*

ARGENE.

Leave me, ingrate!
I'll hear no more!

LYCIDAS.

Ye Pow'rs! I'm all diſtraction!

ARGENE.

No; the flatt'rer Hope in vain
Eſſays his ſoothing pow'r:
Revenge alone I ſeek to gain,
And love expect no more.

Let peace be baniſh'd from thy breaſt,
Where treaſon holds her ſeat;
I'll call myſelf no more diſtreſt,
But all my pains forget.

SCENE XIII.

LYCIDAS *alone.*

Was ever fate ſo cruelly perplex'd!
If Argene betrays me, I'm undone!
I muſt purſue her yet, and calm her rage;
But who, meanwhile, ſhall pacify the princeſs!
My friend alone——but whither is he gone?
I'll ſeek him; Megacles at leaſt will give me
Advice and comfort. [*Going.*

SCENE XIV.

LYCIDAS, AMYNTAS.

AMYNTAS.

Megacles is dead.

LYCIDAS.

Say'ſt thou, Amyntas!

AMYNTAS.

'Tis, alas! too true.

LYCIDAS.

Ha! wherefore!—Say, what impious hand has dar'd
Cut off a life ſo precious? Let me find him,

He ſhall be made a monument of vengeance
To all mankind.

AMYNTAS.

Forbear thy ſearch, and know
'Twas Lycidas that kill'd him.

LYCIDAS.

Me!—Thou rav'ſt!

AMYNTAS.

O would to Heav'n I did! wand'ring but now
In ſearch of thee, amid theſe trees I heard
A ſudden groan, and haſt'ning tow'rds the ſound,
Beheld a man who turn'd his ſword unſheath'd
Againſt his breaſt, and ſtood prepar'd to fall
Upon the fatal point: I ran to ſave him,
Held him from death, and ſnatch'd the weapon from him:
But when I ſaw the face of Megacles,
Think how we both remain'd; recov'ring ſoon,
What madneſs urges thee to ſeek thy death?
I would have ſaid, but ere I could begin,
" Amyntas, I have liv'd enough.—" (he cry'd,
And ſigh'd full deeply from his inmoſt heart)
" I cannot, will not longer bear the light,
" Depriv'd of Ariſtea; ten long years
" I've liv'd for her! 'Tis Lycidas, ye Pow'rs!

" Unknowing kills me: yet he wrongs me not;
" This life was once his gift, and he reſumes it."

LYCIDAS.

Alas! my friend!——Go on——

AMYNTAS.

This ſaid he vaniſh'd
Swift as a Parthian ſhaft. Thou ſee'ſt yon' rock,
Whoſe low'ring front o'erſhadows Alpheus' ſtream:
Like light'ning thither ſpeeding, from the ſummit
He leap'd, and headlong plung'd amid the flood.
In vain I cry'd for help, the waves receiv'd him,
And op'ning, ſwift in circling eddies whirl'd,
Then ſudden clos'd again; the echoing banks
Return'd the ſound, and I no more beheld him.

LYCIDAS.

What dreadful ſcene now riſes to my ſight!

AMYNTAS.

O let us ſeek at leaſt thoſe dear remains
That once contain'd ſuch treaſure of a ſoul:
'Tis the laſt office that afflicted friendſhip
Can pay his memory!

SCENE

SCENE XV.

LYCIDAS *alone.*

Alas! Where am I!
What has befall'n! Muſt then offended Heav'n
Show'r all its wrath on my devoted head?
O Megacles! Where art thou, Megacles!
What is this world without thee? Cruel Gods!
[*Raving.*
Reſtore to me my friend! 'Twas you who ſnatch'd him
From my embrace, from you I now demand him;
If you refuſe to give him to my vows,
Where'er he is, by force I'll wreſt him from you;
I fear not all your bolts——I have a ſoul
Can urge my ſteps to tread the paths of death,
Which Hercules and Theſeus trod before,

SCENE XVI.

LYCIDAS, ALCANDER.

ALCANDER.

What, Lycidas!

LYCIDAS.

Ev'n from the utmoſt height——
[*Not hearing* Alcander.

ALCANDER.

Hear, Lycidas!

LYCIDAS.

Ha! what art thou whoſe raſhneſs
Breaks in upon my frenzy?

ALCANDER.

From the king
I come a meſſenger.

LYCIDAS.

What would the king?

ALCANDER.

He wills that thou be baniſh'd far from hence,
A ſhameful exile: ſhould the ſetting ſun
Leave thee in Elis, thou'rt condemn'd to die.

LYCIDAS.

And ſends he thus to me?

ALCANDER.

Learn hence t'aſſume
A borrow'd name, to break the bonds of faith,
And dally with the majeſty of kings.

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

Dar'ſt thou, raſh man!——

ALCANDER.

No more--thus far, O prince!
My duty bids me, which I have fulfill'd;
The reſt remains with thee.

SCENE XVII.

LYCIDAS *alone.*

Preſumptuous man! [*Draws.*
This ſword ſhall thro' thy breaſt——What have I ſaid?
Whom would my rage chaſtiſe? 'Tis I am guilty:
I am th' offender——Let me rather plunge
My weapon here——Die, wretched Lycidas!
Ha! wherefore doſt thou tremble, coward hand,
What is't withholds thee?—This indeed is mis'ry:
I hate my life, and yet my death affrights me.
My heart is torn in pieces! Rage, revenge,
Repentance, friendſhip, tenderneſs, compaſſion,
Love, ſhame, all, all diſtract me: never breaſt
Was rent before with ſuch contending paſſions!
What can this mean? I tremble 'midſt my threats!
I burn and freeze; I weep ev'n while I rave;
I wiſh for death, yet know not how to die.

Methinks the ſhades of night ariſe,
And blot the luſtre of the ſkies!
Around what horrid forms appear!
I feel a thouſand furies here!

Megœras' ſanguine torch inſpires
My boſom with terrific fires!
Alecto all her venom drains,
And ſheds the poiſon thro' my veins.

ACT III. SCENE I.

A double path formed by the ruins of an antient Hippodrome, in a great part overgrown with ivy, brambles, and other wild plants.

MEGACLES, *held by* AMYNTAS, *on one ſide, and on the other,* ARISTEA, *held by* ARGENE, *unſeen of each other.*

MEGACLES.

Leave me, thou ſeek'ſt in vain t'oppoſe my purpoſe.

AMYNTAS.

O! think my friend! think yet again: believe me
Thou may'ſt not find once more the fiſher's hand
Whoſe aid but now preſerv'd thee from the ſtream:
Reflect that Heav'n is tir'd of ſuccouring them
Who tempt too far its goodneſs.

MEGACLES.

Impious ſuccour!
Inhuman pity! to refuſe him death
Who lives a dying life! O Heav'n!—Amyntas,
Leave me.

AMYNTAS.

AMYNTAS.

O never!

ARISTEA.

Leave me, Argene.

ARGENE.

No, hope it not.

MEGACLES.

Depriv'd of Ariſtea,
I cannot, ought not longer to ſurvive.

ARISTEA.

Yes, I will die where Megacles was loſt!

AMYNTAS.

Yet ſtay.

ARGENE.

Yet hear me.

MEGACLES.

Wherefore ſhould I ſtay?

ARISTEA.

What muſt I hear?

MEGACLES.

MEGACLES.

There is no comfort now
Remains for me.

ARISTEA.

I have no hope on earth.

MEGACLES.

Yet to prolong my life thou ſtriv'ſt in vain.

ARISTEA.

To keep me here from means of death, in vain
Thou would'ſt attempt.

AMYNTAS.

Yet ſtay.

ARGENE.

Yet hear.

ARISTEA.

O Heav'n!

MEGACLES.

O Gods!

[*Meeting each other in the middle of the ſtage.*

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

And art thou Megacles!

MEGACLES.

Ah! princeſs!

ARISTEA.

Ungrateful! doſt thou hate me, fly me thus?
That when I ſeek for death t'unite me to thee,
Thou tread'ſt again the paths of life.

MEGACLES.

Behold,
My deareſt Ariſtea, how I'm curs'd!
All, all the ways that lead to wiſh'd-for death,
Are barr'd againſt me.

ARISTEA.

Say, what pitying hand——

SCENE II.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA, AMYNTAS, ARGENE, ALCANDER.

ALCANDER.

O! ſacrilegious madneſs! impious fury!

ARISTEA.

What new diſaſters are there yet in ſtore!
Alcander, ſpeak.

ALCANDER.

This inſtant has thy father
Receiv'd new life.

ARISTEA.

What doſt thou mean?

ALCANDER.

What mourning,
What ruin might have cover'd all the land,
Had Heav'n preſerv'd him not.

ARISTEA.

Say, how?

ALCANDER.

Thou know'ſt
By ancient cuſtom that the ſolemn pomp
Of ſacrifice concludes this feſtive day.
While Cliſthenes, encompaſs'd by his guards,
Drew near the hallow'd temple to compleat
The ſacred rites, whate'er the cauſe we knew not,
Or whence he came, but Lycidas impetuous
Oppos'd

Oppos'd our way; ſuch dreadful looks till then
I ne'er beheld; his right hand graſp'd a ſword,
His head was bare, and all his garments torn;
His locks diſhevell'd; from his fiery eyes
Darted malignant beams; fierce indignation
Fluſh'd on his cheek ſtill moiſt with recent tears:
Amid th' aſtoniſh'd guards he forc'd his way,
And ruſhing tow'rds the king----Here end thy life,
Furious he cry'd, and rais'd his impious ſteel.

ARISTEA.

O Gods!

ALCANDER.

The king, with countenance unchang'd,
Stood ſtill to wait th' event, fix'd on the youth
A look ſevere, and thus majeſtic ſpoke:
Raſh man, what mean'ſt thou?—Mark how Heav'n protects
The lives of kings!——Theſe words at once ſtopt ſhort
Th' inſenſate youth; a ſudden chillneſs froze him;
His lifted arm refus'd the fatal blow;
With awe he own'd offended majeſty,
Grew pale and trembled, dropt his threat'ning ſword,
And from his eyes that glar'd ſo late with rage,
The copious tears guſh'd forth.

ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

I breathe again.

ARGENE.

O fatal raſhneſs!

AMYNTAS.

O unthinking youth!

ARISTEA.

What of my father now?

ALCANDER.

He has before him
The criminal in chains.

AMYNTAS.

Ah! let us try
What means may ſave him yet.

SCENE III.

MEGACLES, ARISTEA, ARGENE, ALCANDER.

MEGACLES.

Tell me, what ſays
Unhappy Lycidas?

ALCANDER.

To all they aſk
He nought replies; tho' doom'd to death, he ſeems
To know it not, or heeds not what befalls him.
He weeps, he calls on Megacles, for him
Enquires of all, on that dear name his lips
Still dwell, as if no other ſound they knew.

MEGACLES.

I can no longer hold: for pity's ſake
Lead, lead me to my friend.

ARISTEA.

O unadvis'd!
Where would thy raſhneſs tempt thee! Haſt thou not
Deceiv'd my father? Know'ſt thou not that thou
Art Megacles? T'appear before the king,
Would ruin thee, and cannot ſave thy friend.

MEGACLES.

Yet let me die at leaſt with Lycidas. [*Going.*

ARISTEA.

Hear me: Believ'ſt thou not 'tis better far
That I ſhould fly t'appeaſe my angry father?

MEGACLES.

MEGACLES.

I durſt not hope ſo much.

ARISTEA.

Yes, for thy ſake
At leaſt I'll try.

MEGACLES.

O gen'rous Ariſtea!
Grant Heav'n that virtuous ſoul may long reſide
In thy dear form: I ſaid, when firſt I ſaw thee,
Thou wert not mortal—go, my love!

ARISTEA.

Enough;
This needs not, one perſuaſive look from thee
Binds me to all that Megacles can aſk.

In thee I bear ſo dear a part,
By love ſo firm am thine;
That each affection of thy heart,
By ſympathy is mine.

When thou art griev'd, I grieve no leſs,
My joys by thine are known:
And ev'ry good thou would'ſt poſſeſs,
Becomes in wiſh my own.

SCENE IV.

MEGACLES, ARGENE.

MEGACLES.

Aſſiſt, ye mighty Pow'rs! the pitying goodneſs
Of Ariſtea!——Will her father then
Forego his indignation! Juſtice ſure
Too ſtrongly claims th' offender's puniſhment:
And yet paternal love may conquer all.
But ſhould it fail——O Heav'n! might I at leaſt
Be witneſs to their converſe——Argene
At diſtance I will follow.

ARGENE.

No, forbear:
Why ſhould thy care for him diſtreſs thee thus?
Thou ſee'ſt the Gods themſelves are weary'd grown,
Then leave him to his fate.

MEGACLES.

Ha! leave my friend!
O no, ſuch baſeneſs never ſhall be mine!

When Heav'n aſſum'd a pleaſing face,
I follow'd him in ſmiling ſkies:
Then let me ſtill his footſteps trace,
Tho' round us gath'ring ſtorms ariſe.

As

As in the furnace gold refin'd,
Caſts ev'ry droſs impure away:
So in adverſity we find
That conſtant friends their faith diſplay.

SCENE V.

ARGENE *alone.*

Spite of myſelf I feel compaſſion for him:
Fain would I ſhew my rage; I know full well
I've ample cauſe, but midſt my anger ſtill
My threat'ning lips belye my trembling heart.
And wilt thou Argene confeſs this weakneſs!
It ſhall not be——ungrateful! perjur'd man!
I here deteſt my pity, never more
Will I behold that treach'rous face! 'tis now
The object of my ſcorn; I ſhould exult
To ſee him puniſh'd: ſhould he fall before me
Wounded to death, I would not ſhed a tear.

SCENE VI.

ARGENE, AMYNTAS.

AMYNTAS.

Where ſhall Amyntas fly? Ill fated day!
O Lycidas!

ARGENE.

Is then the traitor dead!

AMYNTAS.

No, but he ſoon muſt die.

ARGENE.

Believe it not,
Amyntas: many with the wicked join,
And hence they never fail of help at need.

AMYNTAS.

Thou art deceiv'd: there is no more to hope.
The laws pronounce his death; the people murmur;
The prieſts exclaim: offended majeſty
Demands his blood: the criminal is nam'd
A victim to compleat the ſacrifice
He had profan'd: the public have already
Confirm'd his ſentence: he muſt now be ſlain
On Jove's high altar; there th' offended king
Muſt to the prieſt preſent the ſacred ax.

ARGENE.

Can nought reverſe his doom?

AMYNTAS.

AMYNTAS.

What can reverſe it?
The youth already is enrob'd with white:
I ſaw him crown'd with flow'rs—O Heav'n!—
I ſaw him
Move to the temple: now, perhaps ev'n now,
He is arriv'd, and now, O Argene,
The conſecrated ſteel may drink his blood!

ARGENE.

Alas! unhappy prince!

AMYNTAS.

Why ſhouldſt thou weep
When tears are vain?

ARGENE.

And comes not Ariſtea?

AMYNTAS.

She comes, but nothing has obtain'd; the king
Or will not hear, or cannot grant her ſuit.

ARGENE.

And what of Megacles?

AMYNTAS.

Hapleſs he's fall'n
Upon the guards that fought his track: but now

I heard him midſt his chains demand to die
To ſave his friend; and were himſelf not guilty
He had obtain'd his wiſh; but never here
One criminal can for another bleed.

ARGENE.

At leaſt he has procur'd another victim
That may and will redeem him: Gen'rous goodneſs!
O glorious fortitude! Can I hear this
Without a bluſh! Are then the bonds of friendſhip
More ſtrong than thoſe of love?——My ſoul is warm'd
To emulate ſuch virtue! let us gain
Our ſhare of honour, while the world endures
Let my misfortunes be admir'd and pity'd,
And none with tearleſs eyes repeat my name.

My boſom glows with unknown fire,
I feel the God my ſoul inſpire;
No mortal bounds his pow'r reſtrain.
Methinks I ſee, unmov'd with fear,
Cords, axes, wheels, and ſwords appear,
And dreary ſhades of victims ſlain!

SCENE

SCENE VII.

AMYNTAS *alone.*

Fly! ſave thyſelf, Amyntas! on theſe ſhores
All, all is death and horror: yet, O Heav'n!
Where ſhall I go, depriv'd of Lycidas?
I who have nurs'd him from his infant years,
Bred him from birth obſcure to regal honours,
Shall I forſake him thus, depart without him?
No, to the temple I'll again return;
There meet the fury of th' offended king:
Let Lycidas involve me in his fate,
There let me die with grief, but die beſide him:

Like the poor wretch by tempeſts thrown
To ſuffer wreck on ſeas unknown,
When 'midſt the waves he pants for breath,
And ſtruggles with ſurrounding death.

The wreck that bore him, bears no more,
The ſtars are loſt he view'd before;
Ev'n hope her ſeat no longer keeps,
But leaves him helpleſs to the deeps.

SCENE VIII.

An outſide view of the temple of JUPITER OLYMPUS, *the deſcent from which is by a magnificent flight of ſteps. An open place before the temple, with an altar burning in the middle: around is a wood of ſacred olive-trees, from whence the crowns are made for the victors in the games.*

CLISTHENES *deſcends from the temple preceded by a crowd of people and his guards,* LYCIDAS *in white veſtments crown'd with flowers:* ALCANDER, *Chorus of prieſts, ſome of whom carry the inſtruments of ſacrifice.*

CHORUS.

Eternal Pow'r! in Heav'n rever'd,
Great Sire of Gods attend!
Thy vengeful bolts, by mortals fear'd,
Great God of Kings ſuſpend!

PART CHORUS

See mighty Jove! thy wrath t'aſſuage,
His blood thy altar ſtain,
Who in a King, with impious rage
Thy image durſt profane.

CHORUS.

Eternal Pow'r! in Heav'n rever'd,
Great Sire of Gods attend!

Thy vengeful bolts, by mortals fear'd,
Great God of Kings ſuſpend.

PART CHORUS.

The wretch ſhall paſs the dreary tide
From Lethe's ſilent ſhore:
With him ſhall all our fears ſubſide;
His guilt be heard no more!

CHORUS.

Eternal Pow'r! in Heav'n rever'd,
Great Sire of Gods attend!
Thy vengeful bolts, by mortals fear'd,
Great God of Kings ſuſpend!

CLISTHENES.

Ill fated youth! behold thy hapleſs days
Draw to their wretched period: yet may Jove
Puniſh me if I feel not ſuch compaſſion
I dare not look on thee: and would to Heav'n
I could conceal thy crime: but this, my ſon,
This muſt not be. I'm guardian of the throne,
To me the dignity unſtain'd deſcends,
And I muſt render it unſtain'd to him
Who ſhall ſucceed me, or muſt vindicate
The rights infring'd. It is the painful duty
Of thoſe who reign, ſometimes to curb their pity.
But if thou wiſheſt aught, except thy life,
Speak freely thy deſire; and here I ſwear

To

To ſee it duly anſwer'd: yes, my ſon,
Aſk what thou wilt, and cloſe thy eyes in peace.

LYCIDAS.

My father, for theſe words are from a father
And not a king and judge, I hope not, aſk not,
Deſire not pardon; nor would ev'n receive it.
Fate with afflictions has ſo heap'd my days,
That life not death I fear: my only wiſh,
Since he ſtill lives, is to behold my friend
Before I die: this final grace I beg,
Let me embrace him once and die contented.

CLISTHENES.

Thy ſuit is granted. Guards! let Megacles
Be brought before our ſight.

ALCANDER.

You weep, my lord!
What new compaſſion has ſo far depreſs'd
Your troubled ſoul?

CLISTHENES.

Alcander, I confeſs it.
I wonder at myſelf; his looks, his voice
Have rais'd a ſtrange emotion in my heart
That vibrates thro' my frame: Midſt all my thoughts

I ſeek

I ſeek, but ſeek in vain to find the cauſe;
Ye righteous Gods what can theſe tumults mean?

Whence can theſe tender paſſions riſe?
This warmth that thro' my boſom flies,
This new, but pleaſing pain?
Sure pity never could impart
Such ſtrong emotions to the heart,
That thrill thro' ev'ry vein.

SCENE IX.

CLISTHENES, LYCIDAS, ALCANDER, PRIESTS, PEOPLE, MEGACLES, *guarded.*

LYCIDAS.

Come, great example of unſully'd friendſhip,
Come, moſt belov'd, and deareſt Megacles!

MEGACLES.

Alas! my prince, and do I find thee thus?

LYCIDAS.

To ſee thee living makes me bleſt in death.

MEGACLES.

And what is life to me if I'm deny'd
To pay it for thy ſafety: yet thou ſhalt not

Be

Be long before me; no, my Lycidas,
Together ſhall our friendly manes croſs
The diſmal ford.

LYCIDAS.

O! thou, while fate permitted,
The dear companion of my joys and ſorrows!
Yes, we muſt part: ſince then we've reach'd at length
This fatal hour, give me thy faithful hand
And hear me; 'tis my pray'r, my laſt command;
Still live, I charge thee live; and O! my friend,
Cloſe with thy pitying hand my dying eyes:
Sometimes remember me: return to Crete:
There to my father——moſt unhappy father!
All unprepar'd for ſuch a cruel ſtroke!
There ſoften, while thou tell'ſt the bitter tale;
Comfort, aſſiſt his age oppreſs'd with grief,
I recommend him to thee——if he weeps,
Dry up his tears, and if he aſks a ſon;
Thou, in thyſelf, to him a ſon reſtore.

MEGACLES.

Ah! hold——thy words diſtract me!

CLISTHENES.

No Alcander,
I can reſiſt no longer: mark thoſe looks,
Obſerve

Obſerve each ſtrict embrace, each tender ſigh,
Thoſe laſt adieus confus'd with frequent tears!
Unhappy ſtate of frail mortality!

ALCANDER.

My lord, the hour for ſacrifice is paſt.

CLISTHENES.

'Tis true——Ye ſacred miniſters, receive
The victim to your charge, and you, ye guards,
Divide him from his hapleſs friend.

[*The prieſts and guards part them.*

MEGACLES.

Barbarians!
O! from my breaſt, you rend my bleeding heart.

LYCIDAS.

Alas! my friend!

MEGACLES.

My deareſt prince!

BOTH. Farewell!

[*looking on each other at a diſtance.*

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

Eternal Pow'r! in Heav'n rever'd,
Great Sire of Gods attend!
Thy vengeful bolts, by mortals fear'd,
Great God of Kings ſuſpend!

[*While the Chorus is ſung,* Lycidas *kneels at the altar by the ſide of the Prieſt. The King receives the conſecrated ax from one of the Miniſters of the temple; and as he is preparing to deliver it to the Prieſt, the foregoing verſe is ſung accompanied with ſolemn muſic.*]

CLISTHENES.

O Sire of Gods and men! Almighty Jove!
At whoſe dread nod, earth, ſea and Heav'n are mov'd!
Thou, with whoſe pow'r the univerſe is fill'd,
Thou, from whoſe hand depends the wond'rous chain
Of cauſes and events! accept this victim
Now ſacrific'd to thee; and may it wreſt
The threat'ning thunder from thy awful hand!

[*As* Cliſthenes *is about to deliver the ax to the Prieſt, he is interrupted by the ſudden appearance of* Argene.

SCENE

SCENE X.

CLISTHENES, LYCIDAS, ALCANDER, PRIESTS, PEOPLE, MEGACLES, ARGENE.

ARGENE.

Forbear, O king! Forbear ye holy priests!

CLISTHENES.

O raſhneſs unadvis'd! Thou know'ſt not, nymph,
What rites thou haſt diſturb'd.

ARGENE.

I rather come
To make them more acceptable to Jove;
I bring a guiltleſs voluntary victim,
One who has fortitude enough, and ſeeks
To die for this offender.

CLISTHENES.

Where's the victim?

ARGENE.

In me behold it.

MEGACLES.

Wondr'ous proof of love! [*Aſide.*

LYCIDAS.

LYCIDAS.

O my confuſion! [*Aſide.*

CLISTHENES.

Know our law permits not
The weaker ſex to ſuffer for the ſtrong.

ARGENE.

Yet ſure the wife may ſuffer for her huſband:
For thus I've heard Alceſte in Theſſalia
Preſerv'd Admetus' life; and well I know
That her example is become our law.

CLISTHENES.

What art thou then the wife of Lycidas?

ARGENE.

He gave his hand, and plighted me his faith.

CLISTHENES.

Lycoris, hearing thee, I've more than caught
Thy frenzy: can a Kingdom's heir eſpouſe
A low-born ſhepherdeſs?

ARGENE.

ARGENE.

I'm not Lycoris,
Nor am I lowly born——my name is Argene:
The ancient glory of my noble blood
Is known in Crete; and Lycidas can tell
If e'er he vow'd me love.

CLISTHENES.

Speak, Lycidas.

LYCIDAS.

'Tis ſurely now compaſſion to be falſe. [*Aſide.*]
Believe her not. [*To* Cliſthenes.

ARGENE.

Ha! canſt thou then deny it?
Turn thee, ingrate! if me thou wilt not own,
Yet ſee thy gifts; behold this golden chain,
Which I from thee receiv'd that hapleſs day
When thou didſt ſwear to take me for thy bride.

LYCIDAS.

O 'tis too true! [*Aſide.*]

ARGENE.

Behold him, mighty king.

CLISTHENES.

Guards! take her from my preſence.

ARGENE.

Hear, my friends!
Ye ſacred miniſters! Eternal Gods!
If any Gods are preſent at theſe rites,
This ſacrifice unjuſt, before ye all
I here proteſt, I ſwear that I am wife
To Lycidas, and I will die for him;
Nor ſhall a pow'r——O princeſs! haſte, aſſiſt me,
Thy father hears me not.

SCENE XI.

CLISTHENES, LYCIDAS, ALCANDER, MEGACLES, ARGENE, PRIESTS, ARISTEA.

ARISTEA.

Believe me, ſir,
She well deſerves your pity.

CLISTHENES.

Would you then
Reduce me to diſtraction like yourſelves?
Speak, but be brief. [*To* Argene.

ARGENE.

ARGENE.

Then let theſe jewels ſpeak
While I am ſilent; do the nymphs of Elis
Wear ornaments like theſe?
[*Gives the chain to* Cliſthenes.

CLISTHENES.

What do I ſee! [*diſturbed.*
Tell me, Alcander, know'ſt thou not this chain?

ALCANDER.

Know it! 'Tis what adorn'd thy helpleſs ſon,
When to the waves an infant I expos'd him.

CLISTHENES.

Lycidas!—Heav'ns! thro' all my frame I tremble!
Riſe, Lycidas——look here——ſay, is it true?
Had ſhe this gift from thee?——

LYCIDAS.

And yet for that
She muſt not die——our promiſe was a ſecret——
It never had effect——the marriage rites
Were never ſolemniz'd.

CLISTHENES.

I ask but this,
Was this thy gift?

LYCIDAS.

It was.

CLISTHENES.

Say, from what hand
Didst thou receive it?

LYCIDAS.

From Amyntas' hand.

CLISTHENES.

And who is that Amyntas?

LYCIDAS.

One to whom
My father gave the charge to form my youth.

CLISTHENES.

Where is he now?

LYCIDAS.

With me he came from Crete,
With me arriv'd at Elis.

CLISTHENES.

CLISTHENES.

Inſtant ſeek
For that Amyntas.

ARGENE.

He himſelf is here.

SCENE XII.

CLISTHENES, LYCIDAS, ALCANDER, MEGACLES, ARGENE, ARISTEA, PRIESTS, AMYNTAS.

AMYNTAS.

O Lycidas! [*Offers to embrace him.*

CLISTHENES.

Forbear awhile, and anſwer,
But truly anſwer, whence thou hadſt this chain.

AMYNTAS.

My lord, 'twas giv'n me by a hand unknown;
Since which have twenty-five long years elaps'd,

CLISTHENES.

But where was this?

AMYNTAS.

Where turbulent Aſopus
Near Corinth pours his current to the ſea.

ALCANDER.

Sure in that viſage I confeſs the trace
Of features ſeen before; I'm not deceiv'd,
'Tis he himſelf! [*Aſide.*]——O mighty king! I'm guilty, [*Kneels.*
And own my former crime: yet grant me pardon,
And I'll diſcloſe the whole.

CLISTHENES.

Riſe then, and ſpeak.

ALCANDER.

I did not, as thou gav'ſt to me in charge,
Expoſe the infant; vanquiſh'd by my pity,
I gave him to this ſtranger, who by chance
Appear'd before me, hoping he might bear
The hapleſs child to ſome far diſtant ſhore.

CLISTHENES.

Where is that child, Amyntas? What befell him?

AMYNTAS.

I——Heav'n! What myſtery muſt I reveal!

CLISTHENES.

CLISTHENES.

Ha! art thou pale? Speak, wretch, what didſt
thou with him?
Add not by ſilence to thy former guilt.

AMYNTAS.

Thou haſt him preſent——Lycidas is he.

CLISTHENES.

How! Is not Lycidas the prince of Crete?

AMYNTAS.

That prince an infant dy'd: when I to Crete
Again return'd, I gave th' afflicted king
This child; and to ſupply the ſon he loſt,
By my advice he bred him for his heir.

CLISTHENES.

Gods! 'tis Philinthus, 'tis my ſon, my ſon!
[*Embracing him.*

ARISTEA.

Ye pow'rs!

LYCIDAS.

Am I your ſon?

CLISTHENES.

Yes; thou wert born
A twin with Ariſtea: Delphos bade me
Expoſe thee, when an infant, to the ſea,
Threat'ning in thee the crime of parricide.

LYCIDAS.

Now I perceive from whence my ſecret horror,
When late this hand was rais'd againſt your life.

CLISTHENES.

Now well I underſtand the ſtrange emotion
I felt before thy preſence.

AMYNTAS.

Happy father!

ALCANDER.

'Tis yours this day to render many bleſt.

CLISTHENES.

Nor do I purpoſe leſs: my ſon ſhall be
The ſpouſe of Argene, and Megacles
Of Ariſtea——but my ſon Philinthus
Is criminal, and ſtands condemn'd to die.

MEGACLES.

No more he's guilty ſince he's found your ſon.

CLISTHENES.

Has then my blood the mighty privilege
Of doing wrong unpuniſh'd? All come here
To ſhew their fortitude; ſhall I alone
Give proofs of weakneſs? Never ſhall the world
Thus witneſs to my ſhame: ye miniſters!
The ſacred fire rekindle on the altar,
Go, die my ſon!——I ſhall not long ſurvive thee.

AMYNTAS.

O cruel juſtice!

ALCANDER.

O inhuman virtue!

MEGACLES.

My lord, forbear, thou canſt not now condemn him;
In Sicyon, not Olympia, art thou king:
The day is paſt in which thou didſt preſide,
The criminal muſt wait the public ſentence.

CLISTHENES.

Then hear the public voice; let that decide,
I neither aſk his life, nor ſeek to ſave him.

CHORUS

CHORUS of PRIESTS and PEOPLE.

The ſon, tho' guilty, ſhall ſurvive,
Nor by his puniſhment deprive,
Of peace a guiltleſs fire!
Let not ſuch horror ſtain the day,
Or unpropitious grief allay
The joys our rites require.

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

TOANTES, King of LEMNOS, Father of HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE, in love with, and betrothed to JASON.

EURYNOME, a Widow Princeſs of the royal blood, Mother of LEARCHUS.

JASON, Prince of THESSALY, in love with, and betrothed to HYPSIPILE; General of the ARGONAUTS in the Expedition to COLCHOS.

RHODOPE, Confidante of HYPSIPILE, in love with, but deceived by LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS, Son of EURYNOME, in love with, but rejected by HYPSIPILE.

The SCENE lies in LEMNOS.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The entrance of the temple of BACCHUS, *adorned with feſtoons of vine leaves, hanging from the arches, and wreathed round the columns. Various images of Satyrs and Silenus's.*

HYPSIPILE *and* RHODOPE, *crown'd with vine leaves, each with a thyrſis in her hand. A troop of Bacchanals at a diſtance.*

HYPSIPILE.

HASTE, Rhodope, in pity to my grief,
Fly, ſave my father: let him not approach
Theſe fatal ſhores, tell him what danger waits
In this deteſted palace; open all
The dire conſpiracy of female malice.

RHODOPE.

And yet this inſtant has thy tongue pronounc'd
The dreadful oath to take thy father's life!
Myſelf beheld thee at the horrid altar
With countenance unmov'd———

HYPSIPILE.

All, all was feign'd
To blind Eurynome; thou ſaw'ſt how fierce
She breath'd her impious rage from breaſt to breaſt;
Say, who can ſtop a torrent's headlong courſe?
When ev'ry one beſides confeſs'd her fury,
Had I remain'd ſuſpected, I had loſt
The means t'aſſiſt my father: filial duty
Taught me to wear the maſk of fell revenge:
But while my lips breath'd out the murd'rous vow,
My heart invok'd the Gods for his protection;
And ev'n my ſeeming boldneſs ſprung from fear.

RHODOPE.

Yet think not me——

HYPSIPILE.

If thou delay'ſt, we're ruin'd—
O fly, my friend! loſe not a moment's time;
Already are his veſſels near the port——
O Heav'n! whom do I ſee! Eurynome!

RHODOPE.

RHODOPE.

What threat'ning vengeance ſparkles in her eyes!

HYPSIPILE.

Whiſper ſome counſel to me, gracious Pow'rs!

SCENE II.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, EURYNOME, *with a train of Women, dreſſed like Bacchanals.*

EURYNOME.

Princeſs! and you my brave companions, hear!
The faithleſs Lemnians from the Thracian ſhores,
Once more regain their long forſaken home:
The glorious taſk is ours t'avenge the wrongs
Of our neglected ſex; th' ingrateful traitors
At length return, but diſtant from our ſoil,
Thrice have they ſeen ſucceſſive harveſts riſe:
They come, but with them bring th' ill-omen'd fruits
Of their deteſted loves, and ſtol'n embraces:
Ev'n in our ſight they bring our hated rivals,
With features painted like the mountain ſavage,
And nurs'd with milk of beaſts; and theſe, O ſhame!

Shall

Shall boaſt the ſpoils of your affronted beauty.
Revenge! revenge! our ſolemn oath is giv'n;
All muſt conſpire to aid the great deſign:
The night will to defenceleſs ſleep conſign
Th' offenders ſpent with toil; the rites of Bacchus
With feſtive ſhouts will drown each dying groan:
O then let fathers, brothers, huſbands, ſons,
Fall undiſtinguiſh'd in one common ruin;
A great example of vindictive juſtice,
To warn mankind to keep their plighted faith.

HYPSIPILE.

Yes, ſhe who harbours pity merits death.

RHODOPE.

How well ſhe feigns a fury! [*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

Rhodope,
Depart with ſpeed, thou know'ſt what I would ſay;
And when the Lemnian troops ſhall gain the land,
Repair to give us tidings.

EURYNOME.

Fruitleſs caution:
Myſelf beheld the ſquadrons leave the ſhips.

HYPSIPILE.

What ſays Eurynome!

EURYNOME.

Ev'n now I ſaw them.

HYPSIPILE.

O let me ſtop my father! [*Aſide, going.*]

EURYNOME.

Whither go'ſt thou?

HYPSIPILE.

To meet the king, and with a forc'd embrace
Conceal my hatred, and prevent ſuſpicion.

EURYNOME.

'Tis now too late——behold Toantes here.

HYPSIPILE.

O Heav'ns! I faint! [*Aſide.*]

SCENE III.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, EURYNOME, TOANTES *attended*, BACCHANALS.

TOANTES.

Thou deareſt of my cares!
Come to thy father's breaſt; remote from thee

I heavier felt the weight of lengthen'd years;
But now, my daughter, thou art preſent with me,
My age ſeems loſt, and youth again revives.
[*Embraces her.*

HYPSIPILE.

O my torn heart! [*Aſide.*]

TOANTES.

What mean, Hypſipile,
Thoſe looks of ſadneſs? Is it coldly thus
A daughter meets her father?

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! thou know'ſt not—[*Aſide.*]
My Lord!——

EURYNOME.

Take heed, Hypſipile. [*Aſide to* Hypſipile.

HYPSIPILE.

O torture! [*Aſide.*]

EURYNOME.

Her weakneſs will betray me.

TOANTES.

Is my preſence
Become ſo hateful to thee?

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! my father!
Thou little know'ſt my thoughts!
[Eurynome *threatens* Hypſipile, *to prevent her ſpeaking.*

TOANTES.

Speak.

HYPSIPILE.

Heav'ns! I cannot.

TOANTES.

Speak, daughter, if thy heart averſe diſclaim
The deſtin'd nuptials with Theſſalia's prince,
Whom ev'ry moment we expect ——

HYPSIPILE.

O ſir!
From the firſt inſtant I beheld, I lov'd him.

TOANTES.

Perchance accuſtom'd in my ſtead to reign,
Thou fear'ſt that my return muſt end thy pow'r;
Thou art deceiv'd; I am no longer here
A Sov'reign or a King: abſolve, condemn;
Rewards and puniſhments are in thy hand;

I aſk no further, dear Hypſipile,
Than here to live with thee, and die beſide thee.
[*Embraces her.*

HYPSIPILE.

No more, my father!——
[*weeps and kiſſes his hand.*

TOANTES.

Whence theſe guſhing tears?

EURYNOME.

The ſoft effuſions of too ſudden joy.

TOANTES.

Exceſs of joy, thro' quick ſurprize,
Oft bids the tears o'erflow;
But ſure ſome paſſion fills her eyes
With drops that ſpring from woe.

Few can deceive, with ſhews of art,
A father's watchful care;
Whoſe ſight explores a daughter's heart,
And reads her ſorrows there.

SCENE

SCENE IV.

HYPSIPILE, EURYNOME, RHODOPE, BACCHANALS.

EURYNOME.

Hypſipile!

HYPSIPILE.

What would'ſt thou?

EURYNOME.

If thy nature
Refuſe to lift thy hand againſt Toantes,
Reſign the taſk to us.

HYPSIPILE.

Why doſt thou ſeek
To rob me of the deed my arm aſpires to?
Think better of my faith.

EURYNOME.

'Tis boldly promis'd:
Thou bid'ſt me truſt thee, yet but now I ſaw
When in thy father's ſight thy looks grew pale.

HYPSIPILE.

Ev'n from the hardy warrior's cheek,
Oft-times the colour flies;
When firſt the trumpet's clangors ſpeak,
And bid the battle riſe.
Yet ſcorns his ſoul, with brave diſdain,
Ignoble doubts to hear;
Tho' on his face awhile remain
The tranſient marks of fear.

SCENE V.

EURYNOME, RHODOPE, BACCHANALS.

EURYNOME.

See, Rhodope! already day declines:
We muſt delay no longer: ſome few moments
Shall give th' expected ſignal——but methinks
Thou look'ſt confus'd.

RHODOPE.

Toantes' rev'rend age
Excites my pity; and in him I ſtill
Reſpect the name and perſon of a king.

EURYNOME.

EURYNOME.

He is our greateſt foe: in cruel exile
By him Learchus dy'd; and Rhodope
Might better ſure remember both our wrongs:
In him I loſt a ſon, and thou a lover.

RHODOPE.

His crimes but well deſerv'd his puniſhment:
For me he feign'd a paſſion, while he ſought
With impious love to force Hypſipile.

EURYNOME.

I ſee full well thou ſeek'ſt with vain excuſes
To hide thy weakneſs.

RHODOPE.

I'm a woman ſtill.

EURYNOME.

Then as a woman burſt thy ſlaviſh bonds,
And vindicate thy ſex on perjur'd man.

'Tis falſely ſaid that woman-kind,
As by the laws of Heav'n deſign'd,
To gentle paſſions ſtill confin'd,
With love alone the heart controul.
'Tis ours alike, when vengeance warms,
To mix in battle's ſtern alarms,
With beauty's or with valour's arms,
T'allure or terrify the ſoul.

SCENE VI.

RHODOPE, LEARCHUS.

RHODOPE.

Why ſeem the Gods regardleſs of mankind!
Is there no pitying pow'r that will protect
This wretched land? O moſt deteſted night!
O horror!——Ha! what do I ſee! Learchus!

LEARCHUS.

Silence, dear Rhodope, betray me not.

RHODOPE.

O Heav'n! thou liv'ſt! all here bewail'd thy death.

LEARCHUS.

I ſpread the rumour to deceive Toantes.

RHODOPE.

What brings thee unadvis'd to periſh here?
Fly, fly, Learchus!

LEARCHUS.

Let me yet a moment
Breathe out my faithful vows.

RHODOPE.

Learchus, no:
Too late thou would'ſt betray my eaſy faith:
'Tis jealouſy that brings thee back to Lemnos.
Haſt thou not heard Hypſipile muſt wed
The prince of Theſſaly? Thou haſt, and now
Thy treach'rous mind revolves ſome black deſign.

LEARCHUS.

Believe me not ſo guilty——

RHODOPE.

Hence! no more:
Fly, ſave thyſelf: to-morrow's fatal dawn
Shall here behold the race of man extinct.
The vengeful daughters of our Iſle have ſworn
To wreak their rage on the devoted ſex:
This is the hour of ſlaughter.

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

Canſt thou hope
That I'm ſo weak? Invent ſome better fiction
To terrify Learchus.

RHODOPE.

Yet believe me;
O fly! thou'rt loſt, if thou contemn'ſt my pity.

LEARCHUS.

Forgive me if I muſt ſuſpect thy pity.
Thou think'ſt I have betray'd thee, canſt thou then
So warmly prize the ſafety of a foe?
No, Rhodope, that virtue ill we credit
Which ſoars above the weakneſs of mankind.

RHODOPE.

Each thinks another's paſſions ſtill
Are by his own expreſt;
And thus confounds the good or ill,
In ev'ry other breaſt:
If thou canſt ſcarcely now conceive
That pity dwells in mine,
With equal pain muſt I believe
That treaſon dwells in thine.

SCENE

SCENE VII.

LEARCHUS *alone.*

No——I deſpiſe a woman's fooliſh threats:
Befall what will we muſt diſturb the nuptials
Of the too happy Jaſon: near the ſhore
A deſp'rate band, inur'd to live on ſpoil,
And long the terror of the ſailor-train,
Attend my nod: I know each avenue
And quarter of the palace; here awhile
I'll lurk conceal'd, and act as time demands.
Let thoſe who but begin to plunge in guilt,
Shrink at the danger; I've already paſs'd
So far from crime to crime, 'twere fruitleſs now
To ſtop my mid career with late remorſe.

Who ne'er has left the flying ſhore,
When firſt he ſails the ocean o'er,
Thinks ev'ry ſtar with fate combin'd,
And dreads a ſtorm in ev'ry wind.
With trembling heart each ſound he hears;
But cuſtom ſoon diſpels his fears;
Then to the billows' roar he ſleeps,
Or careleſs ſings amid the deeps.

SCENE

SCENE VIII.

Part of the garden belonging to the palace, with fountains on each ſide, and a view of a grove ſacred to DIANA. *Time: night.*

HYPSIPILE, TOANTES, LEARCHUS *apart.*

HYPSIPILE.

At length thou'rt ſafe, my father: here unſeen
In Dian's ſacred grove, till my return
Amid theſe ſhades remain.

TOANTES.

Are theſe, my daughter,
Thy Jaſon's nuptials! this our tender meeting!

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! Sir! conceal yourſelf: the time admits not
Of vain complaints.

TOANTES.

O Heav'n! muſt thou return,
Expos'd to all the rage of female malice?

HYPSIPILE.

By this alone I can ſecure our ſafety:

My

My preſence muſt confirm what I've invented,
That all may deem thee dead.

TOANTES.

How canſt thou hope
To blind Eurynome?

HYPSIPILE.

A Lemnian ſlain
Wrap'd in thy regal veſt, ſhall cheat the eye;
O'er him I'll mourn, and ſeem to weep my father.

TOANTES.

I doubt thy pious fraud——

HYPSIPILE.

O no! in Heav'n
There ſtill are Gods that watch the life of kings,
And aid the juſt deſigns of innocence.

TOANTES.

There is no friendly pow'r for us——

HYPSIPILE.

If all
Conſpire againſt us, and vindictive rage
Should for thy blood preſerv'd demand my own,
Flow deep the vital ſtream; at leaſt theſe eyes
Shall

Shall ne'er behold thy death: the world ſhall know
That midſt my ſex's univerſal guilt,
I ſtill purſu'd th' unerring path of virtue,
Nor e'er forgot a daughter's ſacred ties.

SCENE IX.

THOANTES *alone.*

Heroic maid! Fate, I forgive thee all;
Thou mad'ſt me father to Hypſipile,
And ev'ry ſuff'ring's light: take, take my throne,
Deprive me next of life, but cheriſh ſtill
Such ſentiments t'inſpire my daughter's breaſt,
And, pitying Gods! I'll thank you for your bounty.

My ſoul, indulging in the thought,
With tender bliſs runs o'er;
Her words to me that peace have brought,
My breaſt had loſt before.
Deſpis'd alike be ev'ry ill
Which mortals can ſuſtain,
One moment's joy which now I feel,
Is worth an age of pain.

[*Retires into the grove.*

SCENE

SCENE X.

LEARCHUS, TOANTES *apart.*

LEARCHUS.

What have I heard? Did Rhodope indeed
Declare the truth?——How if Hypſipile
Returning here ſhould take me for her father?
O fair device!—then might I ſeize the princeſs,
Deceive and force her——ha! it ſhall be ſo:
But what——no matter——doubtleſs love inſpires
The happy fraud:—be bold my heart—Toantes!
Where can he lie conceal'd? [*Approaches to the grove.*

TOANTES.

A voice unknown
Repeats my name! What means it?

LEARCHUS.

Wretched daughter!
Whom now thy father undeſigning kills.

TOANTES.

What haſt thou ſaid? for whom doſt thou lament?
Who art thou? ſpeak.

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

Unleſs I find the king,
Hypſipile is loſt.

TOANTES.

Ha! loſt! Say, wherefore?
Behold me here. [*Coming out.*

LEARCHUS.

Thanks to the mighty Gods!
But fly, my lord! fly from this impious palace:
In Lemnos 'tis ſuſpected you're conceal'd.
Soon will the vengeful female bands appear;
And ſhould your preſence verify ſuſpicion,
Your daughter for her piety muſt ſuffer.

TOANTES.

At leaſt I'll ſtay and die in her defence.

LEARCHUS.

Ah! if thou truly lov'ſt her, rather fly;
Thy flight alone can ſave her.

TOANTES.

Tell me, friend,
To whom I ſtand indebted for this kindneſs.

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

Thou know'ſt me not—I am—but haſte, depart;
For look, already thro' the parting boughs,
I ſee the mingled gleam of rebel arms.

TOANTES.

When will ye ceaſe your malice, cruel ſtars!

SCENE XI.

LEARCHUS *alone.*

Heav'n proſpers to my wiſh the wiles of love:
Ye tim'rous lovers, learn from me to mix
Boldneſs and ſtratagem—to ſeize—to raviſh—
All means are glorious: be the conqueſt ours,
And whether wit or fortune give the prize,
Alike the victor merits his reward.

Each lover that would win the fair,
May with the warrior well compare,
For whether fame or beauty charms,
Alike the ſchool of love and arms.
The lover uſes fraud and lies;
Inſidious arts the warrior tries;
And both, when victory they gain,
Forget their former toil and pain.

[*Retires into the grove.*

SCENE XII.

A hall illuminated, with an Image of Revenge in the middle.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE.

HYPSIPILE.

Yet hear me——ſhun me not!

RHODOPE.

I dare not ſtay;
My ſoul is chill'd with terror——Can I view
A cruel daughter who has dar'd to ſteep
Her impious weapon in a father's blood?
Leave me——

HYPSIPILE.

Suppoſe thou art deceiv'd?

RHODOPE.

Deceiv'd!
Shall I not then believe theſe eyes that ſaw
The murder'd monarch in his regal palace?
I ſaw, and tremble yet with fear and horror.

HYPSIPILE.

O no, my friend, in him who ſeem'd Toantes,

Thou ſaw'ſt—but hark—ſome one approaches—go,
Attend me at Diana's ſacred grove,
There ſhalt thou know the whole, and further may'ſt
Aſſiſt me with thy friendſhip.

SCENE XIII.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, EURYNOME.

EURYNOME.

One amongſt us
Betrays her faith.

HYPSIPILE.

And whence is this alarm?

EURYNOME.

One of our tyrants yet ſurvives, ev'n now
He was ſurpriz'd within the narrow paſs
That leads into the palace.

HYPSIPILE.

Heav'ns! I doubt——
My father ſure——[*Aſide.*]

RHODOPE.

Perhaps it is Learchus. [*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

Could'ſt thou diſcern his perſon?

RHODOPE.

Has his name
Yet reach'd thy ears?

EURYNOME.

By favour of the ſhade
He ſcap'd our knowledge; but in armour ſheath'd,
Againſt our force he made a bold defence.

RHODOPE.

Is he then taken?

HYPSIPILE.

Is he vanquiſh'd?

EURYNOME.

No:
But ſoon the female ſquadrons muſt o'erpow'r
His ſingle arm.

RHODOPE.

O ill-advis'd Learchus! [*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! wretched father! [*Aſide.*]

SCENE XIV.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, EURYNOME, JASON *with his ſword drawn, purſuing ſome Amazons.*

JASON.

'Tis in vain ye hope
T' elude my juſt revenge, while thus——
[*Sees* Hypſipile.

EURYNOME, RHODOPE.

O Heav'n!

JASON.

My love!

HYPSIPILE.

Ah prince!

JASON.

Is this the Lemnian palace?
Or theſe th' inhoſpitable Lybian ſhores?

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! my lov'd prince! what God has ſav'd your life?

JASON.

I came to celebrate the rites of Hymen,
But found myſelf beſet with hoſtile arms.

HYPSIPILE.

Thou ſhould'ſt e'er this have ſent to give us notice
Of thy arrival.

JASON.

No; I hop'd t'increaſe
Thy rapture by this unexpected meeting:
For this I left my followers in the veſſel,
And tow'rds the palace took my purpos'd way:
When ſudden by an armed troop aſſail'd,
I drew my ſword; and ſoon th' aſſailants fled;
Enrag'd I follow'd; but when now I hop'd
T'o'ertake and puniſh the perfidious band,
I met with thee.

HYPSIPILE.

Go, Rhodope, command
That all forbear the prince of Theſſaly;
His life be ſacred; for our vow extends
To Lemnians only.

SCENE

SCENE XV.

HYPSIPILE, EURYNOME, JASON.

JASON.

Vow! what means Hypſipile?

EURYNOME.

Th' ungrateful ſex have fall'n a ſacrifice
To woman's juſt revenge: there lives not now
A ſingle man in Lemnos.

JASON.

Heav'ns! what force
Suffic'd to perpetrate this horrid purpoſe?

HYPSIPILE.

Night and fatigue betray'd th' unthinking victims;
Some, while they yielded to a falſe embrace,
Expos'd their boſoms to the vengeful ſword;
Some quaff'd fallacious death in poiſon'd bowls;
Some breath'd their laſt in ſleep: a thouſand forms
Conceal'd the treaſon with the maſk of friendſhip.

JASON.

My blood is chill'd with horror—but Toantes—

HYPSIPILE.

He too expir'd amidſt the gen'ral ſlaughter:
Should I ſpeak truth I muſt expoſe my father.
[*Aſide.*]

JASON.

Are theſe the regions where the Furies dwell?
Come, dear Hypſipile, retire with me,
[*takes her hand.*
To breathe in other climes an air leſs cruel,
Where happier omens may attend our loves;
Nor ſhall the death of this ill-fated king
Remain unpuniſh'd: witneſs all ye Pow'rs!
I ſwear full vengeance for the horrid deed.

EURYNOME.

Th' offender's name ſhall calm thy utmoſt rage.

JASON.

O never! never!

EURYNOME.

She's ſo dear to Jaſon,
Thou wilt at once forgive and pity her.

JASON.

No charm ſhall ſtop my wrath, whoe'er is guilty—
So

So may kind love preſerve the pure affections
Of her to whom are all my thoughts devoted.

EURYNOME.

'Twas ſhe that ſlew Toantes.

JASON.

Who?

EURYNOME.

Hypſipile,
Thy wife.

HYPSIPILE.

O Heav'n! [*Aſide.*]

JASON.

Speak, ſpeak, my life, defend
Thy glory from the dreadful imputation:
Can this be true?

HYPSIPILE.

O cruel fate! [*Aſide.*]—Ev'n ſo.
[*to him, after having looked at* Eurynome.

JASON.

Say'ſt thou! [*lets go her hand.*

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

I muſt endure it. [*Aſide.*]

JASON.

Do I dream!
Or is it frenzy all! What voice was that
Struck thro' my heart! Was that Hypſipile!
Did Jaſon hear!

EURYNOME.

Now, prince, compleat thy vow;
Now, if thou wilt, revenge the ſlaughter'd king.

JASON.

Are there ſuch ſavage minds!

HYPSIPILE.

My lord, my Jaſon,
Condemn not yet thy wife.

JASON.

Hence from my ſight!
My wife! am I thy love! who now ſhall preſs
That hand ſtill reeking with a father's murder?
I ſeem already to partake thy guilt
While here with thee I breathe one common air,
And

And my heart ſhudders while I now behold thee.

[*Going, he ſtops at the entrance of the ſcene, and continues looking attentively at* Hypſipile.

HYPSIPILE.

How much, my father, to inſure thy ſafety
Thy daughter ſuffers! [*Aſide.*]

JASON.

Who ſhall henceforth ſay
The looks reflect the image of the mind?
Let them contemplate yonder form, and learn
How vice can lurk beneath the maſk of goodneſs.

HYPSIPILE.

Why doſt thou thus in ſilence gaze upon me?

JASON.

I ſeek thro' all that lovely face
Some marks of cruelty to trace;
No cruelty I find:
So deep from ev'ry ſearching eye,
Can dire revenge and fury lie
Conceal'd within the mind.

SCENE

SCENE XVI.

HYPSIPILE, EURYNOME.

HYPSIPILE.

Hear'ſt thou?——O Heav'n!

EURYNOME.

Sigh not, Hypſipile:
Thou loſeſt thus the glory of the deed;
And theſe weak ſigns of womaniſh repentance,
Diſgrace the former courage thou haſt ſhewn.

SCENE XVII.

HYPSIPILE *alone.*

O let me haſte, and from my lover's mind
Remove an error fatal to my fame.
No——firſt a father's danger claims my care,
Let him be ſafe and then——but ah! meantime
Jaſon forſakes me!——Yet Hypſipile
Shall firſt preſerve the rights of filial duty,
And thoſe preſerv'd, the reſt be left to Heav'n!

I feel

I feel thy pow'r, unpitying love!
Thy hopes and fears too ſtrongly move
A heart with ev'ry pain diſtreſs'd:
Yet ah! forbear——this fatal hour
Muſt love and duty rend no more
With ſtruggling pangs a daughter's breaſt?

ACT II. SCENE I.

Part of the garden belonging to the Palace, with fountains on each ſide, and in the middle a grove ſacred to DIANA. *Time: night.*

EURYNOME, LEARCHUS *apart.*

EURYNOME.

In ev'ry part methinks theſe eyes behold
Some dreadful objects that augment my fury.
Ye lonely horrors of the ſilent night,
Raiſe no remorſe to terrify my ſoul!
Say rather that my ſon's unhappy ſhade
No longer roves without a wiſh'd revenge:
Say that no more he ſighs in vain to croſs
The dire Lethean ſhore; and that his peace
Is cheaply purchas'd by his mother's crime.

LEARCHUS.

It is Hypſipile—be bold Learchus. [*Comes out of the grove.*

EURYNOME.

Some one approaches! Heav'ns! what can it be?

LEARCHUS.

Thou deareſt! [*takes her hand.*

EURYNOME.

Say, what art thou? Whence that voice?

LEARCHUS.

Ha! I'm deceiv'd! [*Retires.*

EURYNOME.

Ye pow'rs! what chilling fear
Runs thro' my veins! Methought I heard the voice
Of my Learchus—where art thou, my ſon!
Ah! do not hide thee from a mother's ſight:
O! ſpeak and tell me why thou art return'd;
What would'ſt thou? Wherefore doſt thou hover
round me?

Unhappy ſhade of him I mourn,
Dear ſon, no longer mine;
If vengeance prompt thee to return,
Know 'tis already thine:
What victim can appeaſe the dead,
What peace canſt thou obtain,
If all the blood this hand has ſhed,
Was ſhed for thee in vain?

SCENE

SCENE II.

EURYNOME, HYPSIPILE *in haſte.*

HYPSIPILE.

Sure Rhodope has reach'd this place before me;
But hark! ſhe's here: fly ſwift, my friend, to Jaſon,
[*meeting* Eurynome, *ſhe takes her for* Rhodope.
Tell him the king yet lives, and that this hour
Shall ſee us both together at the port:
Yet ſtay awhile, for Jaſon with his friends
Perhaps may meet us, and ſecure our flight.
[*goes towards the grove.*

EURYNOME.

What ſecret treaſon here has chance diſcover'd!
Now well I know, my ſon, why round me hovers
Thy plaintive ghoſt: and have I then in vain
Been plung'd in guilt? And ſhall the tyrant live?
O no——nor ſhall it e'er be ſaid Iv'e loſt,
The fruit of all my crimes, a great revenge.
[*goes out in a rage.*

SCENE

SCENE III.

HYPSIPILE, LEARCHUS.

HYPSIPILE.

This is the ſacred grove where lies conceal'd
My deareſt father. At my firſt arrival,
The ſhade, my terror, and impatient duty,
Perplex'd my trembling ſteps; but now full well
I know the place——My lord! my father! haſte.

LEARCHUS.

Sure 'tis the voice of her I love——be bold——'
[*Coming out of the grove.*
O Heav'n! my heart beats quick as I approach her.

HYPSIPILE.

Come near——where art thou?——Yet I hear thy ſteps,
But cannot find thee——'midſt this dreary gloom
Perhaps——O no, thou'rt here. [*Takes his hand.*

LEARCHUS.

Aſſiſt me, Love!
[*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

Thou trembleſt, O my father! fear not; Jaſon
Will make our flight ſecure; for ev'n but now
He reach'd the port of Lemnos.

LEARCHUS.

Fatal chance!
What do I hear? [*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

Already from afar
I ſee the blaze of torches.

LEARCHUS.

Then I'm loſt. [*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

And now methinks I hear my Jaſon's voice.

LEARCHUS.

Let me again retire. [*Returns again to the grove.*

HYPSIPILE.

But whither go'ſt thou?
Why doſt thou fly, my lord?——Alas! how far
Misfortunes can unnerve the firmeſt ſoul!

SCENE

SCENE IV.

HYPSIPILE, LEARCHUS *apart*, EURYNOME *with* BACCHANALS *and* AMAZONS *with arms and lighted torches.*

EURYNOME.

Companions, compaſs round the wood, and ſtop
Each outlet of the garden.

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! Toantes!
Thy fear was ſure prophetic. [*Aſide.*]

EURYNOME.

Thou'rt diſcover'd:
Say where thy father lurks? [*To* Hypſipile.

HYPSIPILE.

Aſſiſt me, Gods! [*Aſide.*]
Doſt thou require the dead?

EURYNOME.

'Tis now too late
For this diſſimulation: thou wert heard
To call his name, and hold a converſe with him.

HYPSIPILE.

O! 'tis too true——his mournful image ever
Appears before my ſight; where'er I go
Purſues my trembling ſteps; calls me ungrateful;
Reproaches me with ſavage cruelty,
That durſt cut ſhort a father's rev'rend days.

EURYNOME.

Her words congeal me, tho' I know ſhe feigns.
[*Aſide.*]

HYPSIPILE.

I tremble while I ſtrive to hide my fear. [*Aſide.*]

EURYNOME.

No more——deceit is vain——

HYPSIPILE.

O Gods! look there!
Behold Eurynome, ſee where he comes!
Obſerve his fiery eyes that ſwell with rage,
While tears of anger trickle down his cheek;
His ſnow-white locks ſtill dropping crimſon blood,
Hang o'er his hoary face: doſt thou not hear
His threat'ning voice, and mark his dreadful mien?
Unhappy ſhade!——Enough have I endur'd
Of puniſhment——O Heav'ns!——In pity, hide,
Hide

Hide from my ſight the torch of hell—take hence
The furies' iron whips——

EURYNOME.

Ill fated princeſs!
My ſoul is mov'd!

HYPSIPILE.

She ſoftens at my words. [*Aſide.*]

EURYNOME.

Yon' trees afford a ſhelter in their gloom
For melancholy phantoms: haſte, my friends,
Hurl round the flames, and ſwift conſume to aſhes
That unpropitious wood.

HYPSIPILE.

Ah, no! forbear
Thoſe trunks devoted to the Sylvan Goddeſs.

EURYNOME.

Hearken not to her——

HYPSIPILE.

Impious! ſhall not then
The Gods themſelves be ſacred from thy fury?
And who ſhall execute the dire command?

EURYNOME.

Unthinking maid! thou haſt betray'd thyſelf:
Behold the grove that now conceals Toantes;
Go, friends, and drag him thence to puniſhment.
[*The Amazons enter the grove.*

HYPSIPILE.

Hear me! O! hear a moſt unhappy daughter!
What ſhall I do? O all ye Pow'rs of Heav'n!
Eurynome have pity!

EURYNOME.

'Tis in vain;
Thy father ſhew'd no pity to my ſon.

HYPSIPILE.

If thou'rt ſo thirſty for revenge, ſtrike here;
O pierce this breaſt, and let me bleed for him!
Behold me ſuppliant, grov'ling at your feet——
[*Kneels.*

EURYNOME.

Her tears diſarm my rage. [*Aſide*]

HYPSIPILE.

O yet relent,
Or change the deſtin'd victim of thy fury.

By

By all that is rever'd in earth or Heav'n,
Ev'n by the aſhes of thy dear Learchus!

EURYNOME.

That name has rouz'd anew my ſleeping rage;
The tyrant dies, ev'n by this hand he dies:
[*Draws her ſword.*
Ne'er will I reſt till I behold my ſword
Drench'd in his blood.

[*As ſhe turns, thinking to find* Toantes, *ſhe meets* Learchus, *conducted by the Amazons from the grove; ſhe ſtands in amazement, and lets fall her ſword.*

LEARCHUS.

My mother!

EURYNOME.

Heav'ns! my ſon!

HYPSIPILE.

What can this mean? Amazement ſeizes me!
[*Riſes.*

SCENE V.

EURYNOME, HYPSIPILE, LEARCHUS, RHODOPE, AMAZONS.

RHODOPE.

What do I ſee? Learchus here and bound!
What pow'r can ſave him!--Yes--I muſt diſſemble.

EURYNOME.

Art thou my ſon! Am I Eurynome!

LEARCHUS.

As certain as deſire t'avenge thy ſon
Has made thee cruel to him.

EURYNOME.

Wretched mother,
That blindly has deſtroy'd thee! Doſt thou live
Only to make me guilty of thy death?
O my lov'd ſon! how dearly muſt I buy
The bitter pleaſure of this fond embrace!

RHODOPE.

Companions, bind the victim to yon' trunk,
And let our thirſty arrows drink his life.

[*The Amazons bind* Learchus *to a tree.*

EURYNOME.

EURYNOME.

Ah! hold——Inhuman——

RHODOPE.

Firſt by force remove
Eurynome, nor let maternal ſorrows
Diſturb our purpoſe.

HYPSIPILE.

O unhappy mother!

EURYNOME.

Have pity, Rhodope——

RHODOPE.

Would'ſt thou o'erturn
The laws thyſelf haſt made?

EURYNOME.

Hypſipile,
Compaſſionate my tears!

HYPSIPILE.

Alas! what pow'r
Remains in me!

RHODOPE.

RHODOPE.

If but a moment more
Thou linger'ſt here, we ſpeed the ſtroke of death.

EURYNOME.

What mortal pangs can equal what I ſuffer!

The laſt farewel how ſhall I ſpeak!
A mother's pain what words can tell!
I feel my heart with anguiſh break——
Dear offspring of my love farewel!
This fond embrace from her receive,
Whoſe fatal error ſeals thy death:
O! that I thus my woes could leave,
And in theſe arms reſign my breath!

SCENE VI.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, LEARCHUS, AMAZONS.

LEARCHUS.

Unpitying princeſs! in Learchus' fate
Behold the dreadful trophies of thy charms!
Exceſs of love impell'd me to this ruin.

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

Learchus, no: thou art thyſelf alone
The cauſe of thy misfortunes.

LEARCHUS.

At my birth
This day was fix'd in fate's eternal volume.

HYPSIPILE.

Unhappy moment when I pleas'd thee firſt!

That hapleſs inſtant when thy eyes
Beheld and thought me fair,
Some baleful ſtar was ſeen to riſe,
And ſhed a diſmal glare.

Leſs cruel would thy hatred prove,
Than ſuch a dire deſtructive love.

SCENE VII.

RHODOPE, LEARCHUS, AMAZONS.

RHODOPE.

My friends, unwelcome here to Nemeſis
Would prove the victim: be the ſacrifice

Public

Public and ſolemn: haſte and raiſe an altar
Amid the full aſſembly of the people:
Convene together all the conqu'ring band:
Meantime myſelf will in this place remain
To guard the pris'ner.

SCENE VIII.

RHODOPE, LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

Never did I think
Such tyranny could harbour in thy breaſt.

RHODOPE.

Ungrateful man! learn better how to judge
The ſoul of Rhodope; I feign'd reſentment
T'avert from thee th'effects of female rage.

LEARCHUS.

Should this be true, my heart is thine——

RHODOPE.

O! no—
Think not I mean to bargain for thy love.

LEARCHUS.

Perhaps thou doubt'ſt me ſtill—By all the Gods—

RHODOPE.

Learchus, hold——I would not have thee purchaſe
My gift with perjury: from Rhodope
Receive at once thy liberty and life. *[unbinds him.*

LEARCHUS.

Yet what return can gratitude afford thee?

RHODOPE.

I'm now rewarded, but thou know'ſt it not.

Thou canſt not judge the gen'rous mind,
What ſweets from mercy flow;
My wrongs might here their vengeance find
But pardon I beſtow.

With ſecret joy th' offended views
Th' offender's bluſhes riſe;
Whoſe fearful conſcience guilt ſubdues,
While ſhame his ſpeech denies.

SCENE

SCENE IX.

LEARCHUS *alone.*

Why does my feeble virtue take th' alarm,
Yet cannot rouze from this lethargic ſleep?
What means this late remorſe? Down, rebel conſcience!
I will not have thee ſtruggling in my boſom:
Rule, or obey; ſubdue, or be ſubdu'd.

Let choice direct, or fate conſtrain
Th' affections of my breaſt,
Yet wherefore ſhould they thus in vain
With doubts my peace moleſt?

If they're compell'd, why do we name
Our paſſions good or ill?
And wherefore are they ſtill the ſame
If they can change at will?

SCENE

SCENE X.

An open country covered over with tents, a proſpect of the ſea: the ſun riſing.

JASON *alone.*

Amidſt a thouſand doubts oppreſt,
My heart ſtill flutters in my breaſt,
But no reſolve my thoughts approve,
While beauties in her face I find,
My ſoul deteſts her ruthleſs mind;
I'm torn by hatred and by love.

And can a lovely face ſo far deceive?
Hypſipile, more fierce than beaſts of prey!
Barbarity like thine exceeds whate'er
Hyrcania's foreſts yield, within whoſe ſhades
No tigreſs lurks ſo cruel to deſtroy
A father's life——and do I then excuſe her?
Frame new pretences to prolong my ſtay?
O no!——my lofty heart diſdains t'avow
Its weakneſs paſt: I once believ'd her worthy
Of Jaſon's flame, and fain would ſtill defend
The choice of love——behold the morning riſes!
And yet my ſpirits keep th' accuſtom'd watch,
Tho' ſpent with fruitleſs care—but now, methinks,
I feel the tumult of my breaſt ſubſide;

My

My eyes grow heavy, and my mind ſuſpends
The painful ſtruggle of conflicting paſſions. [*Sleeps.*

SCENE XI.

JASON *aſleep*, LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

Enough of ill, my ſoul; at length 'tis time,
After ſo many dangers paſt, to change
This baneful courſe: I cannot bear for ever
To tremble near the fatal precipice;
To rev'rence others, and deteſt myſelf.
What do I ſee! my rival ſlumb'ring there!
O! happy thou, born under friendly ſtars!
Th' inhuman fair, who ſcorns my love, reſerves
Her charms for thee; but I in vain muſt mourn
Abandon'd to deſpair; while 'midſt th' embraces
Of mutual fondneſs thou ſhalt ſcorn my ſuff'rings,
And find new pleaſure from Learchus' pains:
O cruel image that diſtracts my heart!
No——let not him ſurvive by whom I periſh;
Here let him die——but ha! what would I do!
Are theſe the gen'rous thoughts I form'd but now?
Is this my late remorſe?

SCENE

SCENE XII.

JASON *aſleep*, LEARCHUS, HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

Where ſhall I meet
My hapleſs father?——Ha!——Learchus here!
What means his ponyard drawn?

LEARCHUS.

The world can ne'er
Be conſcious of this virtue: ſhould I now
Forbear to kill him, my revenge is loſt,
And yet no glory gain'd: the time will come,
I may repent this ill adviſ'd compaſſion:
Then let me ſtrike the blow. [*about to ſtrike.*

HYPSIPILE.

Ah! traitor! hold:
What would'ſt thou do? [*holding his hand.*

LEARCHUS.

Leave me, Hypſipile.

HYPSIPILE.

Hope not I'll e'er permit——

LEARCHUS.

Conſent with me
To quit this place, and I reſign my weapon.

HYPSIPILE.

Firſt let a thunder-bolt from angry Jove
Daſh me to atoms!

LEARCHUS.

Then his fate is fix'd;
There is no mercy for him.

HYPSIPILE.

Stay, Learchus:
If I but waken him, thou'rt loſt.

LEARCHUS.

Ah! hold;
I'm gone, Hypſipile.

HYPSIPILE.

Firſt let thy hand
Reſign the ponyard to me.

LEARCHUS.

There, ingrate!
[*after a pauſe gives up the dagger to her.*
Prince! thou'rt betray'd! [*wakes* Jaſon, *and flies.*

HYPSIPILE.

O ſtay!——

[*Jaſon riſing, and about to draw his ſword, ſees* Hypſipile *with the dagger in her hand.*

SCENE XIII.

JASON, HYPSIPILE.

JASON.

Betray'd! by whom!
Almighty pow'rs!

HYPSIPILE.

My lord!

JASON.

Relentleſs woman!
What have I done to thee? What crime of mine
Incites thy vengeance? That I've lov'd, may merit
Severeſt puniſhment, but not from thee.
Thou would'ſt, inhuman, from the face of earth,
Sweep all th' inhabitants, that none might here
Be witneſs to thy guilt.

HYPSIPILE.

Has then my fate
More ſuff'rings for me? Prince, thou art deceiv'd;
I came not here to take thy life.

JASON.

That dagger,
Thoſe looks confus'd, the voice I heard but now
Which rouz'd me from my ſleep: do not all theſe
Enough condemn thee?

HYPSIPILE.

'Twas another hand
Aſſail'd thy life; I ſav'd it from the danger.

JASON.

Yes; I have wond'rous proofs of thy compaſſion:
She who could pierce a father's breaſt, would doubtleſs
Preſerve a huſband.

HYPSIPILE.

O! I ſlew him not!

JASON.

But if thy lips——

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

My lips, by fate compell'd,
Bely'd my deeds.

JASON.

What if I here beheld
The murder'd monarch?

HYPSIPILE.

'Twas deception all:
Thou didſt not, couldſt not ſee him.

JASON.

Tell me then,
Where is Toantes hid?

HYPSIPILE.

Alas! I know not;
I've ſought him, but in vain——

JASON.

Perfidious woman!
And think'ſt thou Jaſon can be thus deluded?
Is't not enough, but thou muſt mock me too?
Thou haſt confeſs'd thy crime; each tongue confirms it;
Myſelf am witneſs to it; yet thou hop'ſt

T'aſſume the name of innocent! ev'n now
I ſtart from ſleep, I find thee by my ſide,
With looks confus'd, a dagger in thy hand,
Prepar'd to pierce my heart; and wilt thou dare
To tell me all was meant for my defence?
Think not that Theſſaly has form'd her ſons
So eaſy of belief.

HYPSIPILE.

Soon ſhalt thou ſee——

JASON.

I've ſeen enough.

HYPSIPILE.

And wilt thou not——

JASON.

O! no;
I'll hear no more.

HYPSIPILE.

And doſt thou then believe——

JASON.

Yes, I believe that I partake thy guilt
In liſt'ning to thee longer.

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

Muſt we part?

JASON.

Leave me.

HYPSIPILE.

Where is thy former love!

JASON.

With ſhame
I call it now to mind.

HYPSIPILE.

And am I then——

JASON.

Thou'rt poiſon to my eyes!

HYPSIPILE.

Yes, yes, ye furies!
Inhabitants of this deſtructive land,
I find that to be innocent is guilt:
Have I not ſeen enough of ſlaughter ſtain
My native ſoil? Aſſuage your horrid thirſt,
Behold my blood ſhall flow! [*offers to ſtab herſelf.*

JASON.

What doſt thou mean!
[*holds her.*

HYPSIPILE.

Why ſhould'ſt thou, Jaſon, thus reſtrain my hand,
And make me longer drag the life I loathe?

JASON.

Die, if thou wilt, but ſeek ſome other place
To end thy wretched being. [*wreſts the dagger from her.*

HYPSIPILE.

Yet at leaſt——

JASON.

Leave me in peace.

HYPSIPILE.

O hear me!

JASON.

Never, never.

HYPSIPILE.

Kill me, in pity kill me!

JASON.

JASON.

No——I cannot.

HYPSIPILE.

For one laſt look——

JASON.

'Tis guilt but to behold thee.

HYPSIPILE.

My lord! my huſband!

JASON.

Hence! or I am gone.

HYPSIPILE.

Since 'tis your harſh command, I go;
But for this cruelty you ſhow,
Your heart perhaps will anguiſh know,
With ſighs your breaſt may heave!
And when you learn my hapleſs ſtate,
In vain your tears may mourn my fate,
For ſorrow then ſhall prove too late
My ſuff'rings to relieve.

SCENE

SCENE XIV.

JASON, TOANTES.

JASON.

At length ſhe's gone! Thanks to the mighty Gods!
A moment longer thoſe ſeducing tears
Had ſapp'd my beſt reſolves: now far from hence
Let me retire to breathe another air,
Where diſtance may eraze this ſhameful paſſion.

TOANTES.

Ah prince!——my friend!

JASON.

My lord! am I awake!
Or art thou ſov'reign of the Lemnian land?

TOANTES.

At leaſt I have been ſo.

JASON.

I'm all amazement!
How art thou ris'n again? Myſelf beheld thee
Stretch'd pale and lifeleſs in the regal palace:
Either I then but dream'd, or now I dream.

TOANTES.

TOANTES.

Thou ſaw'ſt a murder'd wretch array'd like me,
In princely robes, whoſe ſemblance to myſelf
Deluded ev'ry eye: this pious fraud
Hypſipile contriv'd for my defence.

JASON.

O Heav'n! my love! and art thou guiltleſs then
Of each imputed crime!——Farewel, Toantes,
This inſtant I'll return. [*going.*

TOANTES.

Why would'ſt thou leave me?

JASON.

O! let me find the treaſure of my ſoul;
Soon ſhalt thou know how I have injur'd her.

TOANTES.

Yet hear: what would'ſt thou do? The female bands,
Fluſh'd with their late ſucceſs, ſcour ev'ry part;
And ſhould'ſt thou thus unguarded venture forth,
Thou could'ſt not 'ſcape thyſelf, nor ſave Hypſipile.

JASON.

To arms, to arms! awake, my friends, ariſe:
Follow me ſtrait. [*going towards the tents.*

TOANTES.

Myſelf will guide your ſteps.

JASON.

O no! thy preſence might diſturb our purpoſe,
Amidſt my fury I ſhould fear for thee.
Haſte, my companions, haſte! each moment's precious——
My wife! my friend! O Heav'n, my ſoul is rack'd
Between contending pangs of love and friendſhip.

I leave thee, prince, nor can I tell
But this may prove the laſt farewell!
This arm muſt her I love reſtore,
Or Jaſon ſhall return no more.

[*while this air is ſinging, the Argonauts come out of the tents.*

SCENE

SCENE XV.

TOANTES *alone.*

No——while my dear Hypſipile's in danger,
I will not linger here a tame ſpectator:
A father's love ſhall with new vigour brace
My feeble limbs: each tim'rous beaſt aſſumes
A ſudden fierceneſs to defend its young;
Loudly they threat, lay by their natural fear,
And what was weakneſs late is courage now.

The turtle when ſhe once eſpies
Th' unpitying churl that robb'd her neſt;
Feels the fierce flame of fury riſe,
'Till then a ſtranger to her breaſt:
And though no ſtrength of claws or bill
To guard her helpleſs young avails;
At leaſt the cruel ſpoiler ſtill
She with unceaſing cries aſſails.

ACT III. SCENE I.

A remote part of the Iſland betwixt the city and the ſea-ſhore, with cypreſs trees and monuments of the antient Kings of LEMNOS.

LEARCHUS *with two Pirates.*

LEARCHUS.

Our hopes, my valiant friends, have prov'd abortive;
Fortune oppoſes oft the beſt deſigns:
Go, and let each be ready to depart:
[*The pirates going.*
But ha! what do I ſee!——'tis ſo——Toantes
Comes unattended to this lonely place.
Now for the laſt expedient fate can offer!
Return, my friends. [*pirates return.*

SCENE II.

LEARCHUS, TOANTES.

TOANTES.

I was directed ſtill
T'abide in Jaſon's camp; but anxious thoughts
Forbad me there to reſt.

LEARCHUS.

Obſerve my purpoſe:
Away. [*pirates go out.*

TOANTES.

My boſom throbs with hopes and fears:
I find no peace, but ev'ry moment dread
Some ſtroke of fate: by this untrodden path,
I'll ſeek the regal palace. [*going.*

LEARCHUS.

Now, Learchus,
Let artifice befriend thee. [*Aſide.*]—See, my lord,
The guiltieſt of your ſubjects at your feet:
Permit him thus——[*To him, kneeling.*

TOANTES.

Ye pow'rs!——art thou alive!
Art thou Learchus!

LEARCHUS.

I'm indeed Learchus.

TOANTES.

What wouldſt thou from Toantes?——

LEARCHUS.

Death, or pardon.

TOANTES.

Hence, traitor, dare no more approach my ſight.

LEARCHUS.

Hear me, and then reject me if you will.

TOANTES.

Perfidious! know'ſt thou not what puniſhment
Awaits thee here?

LEARCHUS.

Death I deſerv'd, my lord,
When I preſum'd t'attempt with ruffian force
The fair Hypſipile: but if a fault
Of youth can find no pity from my king,
A fault which love inſpir'd, which keen remorſe
Has ſince ſeverely puniſh'd; here at leaſt,
Here let me periſh in my native land.
Five tedious years, an outcaſt from my country,
Wand'ring in foreign climes, the ſport of fate,
I've liv'd an object loath'd by earth and Heav'n;
And, ah! what wounds me more, my prince abhors me.
I'm weary grown of long protracted woe:
Life is the greateſt evil I endure;
And he, who drives this ſpirit from her dwelling,
Is bounteous while he kills me.

TOANTES.

TOANTES.

Such deſpair
Pleads in his cauſe, and mitigates his crimes.

LEARCHUS.

Why linger thus my friends? [*Aſide, looking out.*

TOANTES.

From thy misfortunes
Learchus, learn in future to reſpect
The majeſty of kings——Be comforted;
And live——I pardon thee. [*Going.*

LEARCHUS.

Alas! my lord,
Still am I left uncertain; grant me then
Some ſurer pledge of mercy.

TOANTES.

After pardon,
What can I grant thee more?

LEARCHUS.

Thy royal hand.

TOANTES.

Receive it, and depart. [*giving his hand.*

LEARCHUS.

O gracious prince,
Whoſe goodneſs imitates the pitying Gods!
This moment has effac'd my paſt misfortunes——
Not yet return'd! [*Aſide.*]———Still trembling, doubtful ſtill,
Behold me at your feet, and proſtrate thus——

TOANTES.

What men ſurround me?
[*Pirates enter armed, and ſurround* Toantes.

LEARCHUS.

So—the ſtroke is giv'n.
[*Riſing.*
Yield me thy ſword.

TOANTES.

Whom ſpeak'ſt thou to?

LEARCHUS.

To thee.

TOANTES.

To me! Almighty Pow'rs! but how——

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

No more:
Thou art my pris'ner.

TOANTES.

What unheard of treaſon!

LEARCHUS.

At length thou'rt fall'n into my ſnare: thy life
Is at my will; endure thy lot with patience.
'Tis thus the world for ever ſhifts the ſcene,
And adverſe fortune ſtill ſucceeds to good:
'Tis now thy turn to plead for mercy.

TOANTES.

Villain!

LEARCHUS.

Toantes, change this language: my example
Might teach thee prudence: 'twas but now I bent
With humble pray'rs, a ſuppliant at thy feet.
To ſuit our tempers, as the various turns
Of life demand, is ſure a needful virtue.
The force thou ſee'ſt is all at my command:
I can at will——

TOANTES.

What canſt thou further do?
Take from this ebbing life its poor remains,
Already irkſome from the double weight
Of years and ſorrow?

LEARCHUS.

Thus Learchus ſaid,
But while he ſpoke, his tongue bely'd his thoughts.

TOANTES.

Great is the diff'rence 'twixt my heart and thine.

LEARCHUS.

Vain boaſting all! each animal that lives,
Deſires to hold his being: conſtancy,
Which heroes vaunt in fate's extremeſt trials,
Is but an art to cheat th' unthinking vulgar:
I read thy ſecret breaſt, and know thou trembleſt.

TOANTES.

Yes, I might tremble, if Toantes' ſoul
Were form'd like thine: a thouſand horrid crimes
Would then for ever haunt my guilty ſight:
Still ſhould I ſeem to hear the bolts of Jove
For ever hiſſing round me; Jove th' avenger,
Who puniſhes the guilt of human-kind.

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

To me the wrath of Heav'n is not ſo dreadful.

TOANTES.

Vain boaſting all! Thou canſt not harbour peace:
For ſtill congenial with our nature, grows
The love of virtue; if it prove too weak
To guard from crimes, at leaſt it will ſuffice
To be their puniſhment: it is a gift
From Heav'n, decreed to be a ſcourge to thoſe
Who dare abuſe it; and the greateſt curſe
The wicked find, is that their hearts retain,
Ev'n in their own deſpight, the ſeeds of honour,
And feel a conſcious ſenſe of ſov'reign goodneſs:
I read thy ſecret breaſt, and know thou trembleſt.

LEARCHUS.

My friends, take hence this ſage philoſopher,
Whoſe knowledge can explore the human mind;
Conduct him pris'ner to the ſhips; and thou,
Lay by that uſeleſs ſword.

TOANTES.

There—take it, traitor!
[*throws away his ſword.*

LEARCHUS.

Now muſt thou bid adieu to kingly pride;
Toantes is the vanquiſh'd, I the victor.

TOANTES.

Firſt, impious wretch! theſe features view,
Then judge impartial of the two,
Where lies the victory:
Though free, thy looks are pale with fear,
While I theſe chains undaunted wear,
And pity feel for thee.

[*He is led off.*

SCENE III.

LEARCHUS, RHODOPE.

LEARCHUS.

Yet that majeſtic mien, thoſe ſentiments
That ſpeak the kingly ſoul—but hold, my thoughts!
Let me reflect on nothing but the gain
Of all my heart aſpires to.

RHODOPE.

O Learchus!

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

Say, Rhodope, whence ſprings thy ſudden fear?

RHODOPE.

Not far from hence a ghaſtly troop of ſtrangers
Conduct Toantes pris'ner to the ſea.
O! if within thy breaſt one ſpark remain
Of bravery or virtue, ſeize this moment
To give it proof: now may'ſt thou cancel all
Thy guilty deeds, and make thy name immortal.

LEARCHUS.

Indeed!——Say, how?

RHODOPE.

Go—combat—free Toantes;
Lay down thy life to ſave thy king from danger;
Periſh or conquer; with one gen'rous action
Efface the mem'ry of thy former crimes,
Nor let me longer bluſh to own I've lov'd thee.

LEARCHUS.

Thou counſell'ſt well, and ſhalt, for thy reward,
Be undeceiv'd: know then, by my command
Toantes is ſecur'd: hence, if thou wilt,
Relate the news to proud Hypſipile:
Warn her to ſcorn no more an enemy,

However weak; ſo little will ſuffice
To injure others, that in humble ſtate,
Ev'n when depreſs'd, a foe may ſtill be fear'd.

Tell her in me ſhe ſoon may find
Th' effects of love ſo ill return'd;
Go, bid her then recall to mind,
How once her pride Learchus ſcorn'd:
And if offended at my deeds,
She gives me now a traitor's name,
Declare th' offence from her proceeds,
Who kindled this deſtructive flame.

SCENE IV.

RHODOPE, HYPSIPILE.

RHODOPE.

Can crimes like theſe debaſe the mind of man?
O wretched daughter! moſt unhappy princeſs!
What wilt thou feel when thou ſhalt hear the tidings!

HYPSIPILE.

My friend! our ſuff'rings all are paſt; and Heav'n
At length is tir'd of heaping woes upon us:
My faithful conſort, and his valiant friends,

Have

Have quell'd the fierce inhabitants of Lemnos:
My innocence is clear'd, my father ſafe:
We're victors, diſcord ſtills her horrid voice,
All, all is love, and peace, and happineſs!

RHODOPE.

And yet——Toantes——

HYPSIPILE.

He ev'n now awaits
Jaſon's return to the Theſſalian camp.

RHODOPE.

O were it ſo!

HYPSIPILE.

What mean'ſt thou! Speak, my friend—

RHODOPE.

Toantes is a pris'ner.

HYPSIPILE.

Ha! to whom?

RHODOPE.

A pris'ner to Learchus.

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

To Learchus!
How know'ſt thou this?

RHODOPE.

But now I met him bound,
Encircled by the followers of that traitor.

HYPSIPILE.

Who are his followers?

RHODOPE.

Wretches like himſelf.

HYPSIPILE.

O heav'nly pow'rs! to what untry'd misfortunes
Will you reſerve me yet!——O fatal day!

SCENE V.

HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, JASON *with the* ARGONAUTS.

JASON.

Hypſipile, my life! what new affliction
Obſcures thoſe lovely eyes?

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

My deareſt lord,
Thou com'ſt in happy time; for O! 'tis thou,
And thou alone canſt eaſe me--Haſte--defend him--
Have pity on me——

JASON.

Speak, my love, what would'ſt thou?
As yet I know not what thy ſpeech intends.

HYPSIPILE.

Toantes—O—my father!—curſt Learchus——
I cannot ſpeak———

RHODOPE.

The traitor, falſe Learchus,
Bears off in chains Toantes to the ſea.

JASON.

Perhaps the ſame——

HYPSIPILE.

Yes, 'tis the ſame Learchus,
Who ſought to kill thee while oppreſt with ſleep,
But failing in the dire deſign, endeavour'd
With baſe ſuſpicions to diſturb our peace.

JASON.

JASON.

Infamous villain!

HYPSIPILE.

Gen'rous prince, behold
An enterprize that's worthy of thy courage:
Thou may'ſt preſerve my deareſt father's life;
O ſave him, or Hypſipile is loſt!
The fatal hour that ſees Toantes periſh,
Cuts ſhort my thread of being.

JASON.

Leave me, love,
To puniſh that perfidious——but meanwhile
Dry up thoſe mournful drops; to ſee thee weep
Softens too much the temper of my heart.

O! let not ſorrow dim thoſe eyes
That rule me with unbounded pow'r;
Aſſuage thy fears,
Diſpel thy tears,
If I'm to boaſt of courage more.
Then ceaſe to bid ſoft paſſions riſe
That all my firm reſolves controul;
For thus my breaſt,
With grief oppreſt,
Forgets what rage ſhould fire my ſoul.

SCENE

SCENE VI.

RHODOPE, HYPSIPILE.

RHODOPE.

O princeſs! do not yield to deep deſpair;
Think not that fortune will for ever frown;
Rely on Jaſon's valour ſtill, and hope.

HYPSIPILE.

How can I hope, ſince born to woe,
My ſorrows never ceaſe,
That this ſad mind ſhould ever know
A tranſient gleam of peace.
Each hour, my ſoul, by fate depreſs'd,
A double anguiſh bears;
She ſinks, with preſent grief diſtreſs'd,
Nor leſs the future fears.

SCENE VII.

RHODOPE, EURYNOME.

RHODOPE.

My thoughts are all perplex'd amid this maze
Of dreadful miſery.

EURYNOME.

EURYNOME.

O Rhodope!
Where is my ſon?

RHODOPE.

Think on thyſelf, inhuman!
Conſult thy ſafety, if thou prizeſt life,
And hide thee from the angry victors' ſight.

EURYNOME.

I prize not life, unleſs I find Learchus.

RHODOPE.

Forget a name that's hateful to the world;
At once thy ſhame and mine.

EURYNOME.

What means this anger?
Didſt thou not ſave him late?

RHODOPE.

Yes—with ſhame I own it.

EURYNOME.

I hope thou doſt but feign this indignation;
For when thy lips once call'd for vengeance on him,
He was thy heart's delight.

RHODOPE.

RHODOPE.

But now my hatred.

The rural maid, with terror mov'd,
Deteſts the roſe which once ſhe lov'd,
Since late her eyes a ſnake ſurvey'd,
Conceal'd beneath the fragrant ſhade.
The bird attempts the bough no more,
From whence with pain he 'ſcap'd before;
No more the wary warbler ſings,
Where once he ſnar'd his trembling wings.

SCENE VIII.

EURYNOME *alone.*

In ſeeking thus my ſon, I loſe myſelf;
But what is life without him? Well I know
Learchus guilty, yet I love him ſtill.
His crimes deſtroy my peace, but in my heart
Affection reigns unquench'd, nay ſtronger grows
The more I find him hated by the world.
Tell me, Almighty Pow'rs! do we derive
A curſe or bleſſing from a mother's name?

At once deſpair and grief I find
With ſudden frenzy fire my mind,
A rage by parents only known:
A hapleſs ſon, by danger preſt,
So deep is graven in my breaſt,
That in his woes I loſe my own.

SCENE IX.

A view of the ſea ſhore, with the ſhips belonging to LEARCHUS; *a plank laid from one of them to the ſhore. On one ſide appear the ruins of the temple of* VENUS; *on the other the remains of an ancient port of* LEMNOS.

JASON, HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, ARGONAUTS: LEARCHUS *and* TOANTES *appear on the deck of one of the ſhips.* TOANTES *in chains, and* LEARCHUS *with a dagger in his hand.*

JASON.

Compoſe thyſelf, Hypſipile; at length
We've reach'd the traitor: follow me, my friends,
To yonder ſhips: now rouze your ſouls to fury;
Be pity baniſh'd: let conſuming flames
Devour the ſails, and ocean's whelming waves

Engulph the veſſels: ſpread the horrid ſlaughter,
That fated vengeance may behold the tide
Red with perfidious blood.

LEARCHUS.

Then be it ſo;
But let Toantes firſt begin to bleed.

HYPSIPILE.

O hold!——

RHODOPE.

Inhuman wretch!

JASON.

What rage tranſports thee!

HYPSIPILE.

My father!—huſband!—O Learchus!—Heav'n!
I can no more!——

LEARCHUS.

Why, why, Hypſipile,
This unavailing grief? On thee depends
His life, or death; aſcend this ſhip, conſent
To be Learchus' wife; and if the daughter
Rewards my faithful love, the father lives.

HYPSIPILE.

What do I hear! O Jaſon!

JASON.

Dar'ſt thou, wretch,
Pronounce the horrid compact! 'tis in vain
I ſtrive to curb my righteous fury longer.

HYPSIPILE.

Have pity, Jaſon! if thou ſhould'ſt aſſail him,
He lifts his impious hand againſt my father.

JASON.

Ten thouſand furies ſtruggle in my breaſt!

LEARCHUS.

Behold, Toantes, ſee thy pious daughter;
See with what zeal ſhe haſtes to ſave thy life!
Thy blood ſhall anſwer her relentleſs ſcorn;
I have endur'd enough. [*about to ſtrike.*

HYPSIPILE.

O hold!——I come.
[*goes towards the ſhip.*

TOANTES.

What wouldſt thou do, my daughter! Canſt thou
thus

Forget what's owing to thyſelf and me?
I little thought that e'er Hypſipile
Would prove her father's ſhame! Have I not bred thee
In virtues worthy of a prince's nuptials,
Not to partake an impious pirate's bed?
And would'ſt thou now become the wretched mother
Of robbers, not of heroes!

HYPSIPILE.

Teach me then
Some better means to ſave thee.

TOANTES.

Save me thus:
Aſſert the honour of my blood; reflect not
It coſt thy father's life; or if the thought
Will riſe, let it but ſtrengthen thy reſolve
To guard my fame unſully'd: live, Hypſipile,
Live with thy faithful lord, and reign for me,
And if the days I loſe to thine are added,
I've liv'd, I've reign'd enough.

RHODOPE.

O fortitude!

JASON.

O gen'rous ſentiments!

HYPSIPILE.

Does not ſuch virtue
Soften thee yet Learchus!

LEARCHUS.

No: it rather
Incites my fury.

HYPSIPILE.

Muſt I then——

LEARCHUS.

No more;
Yield, or he dies.

HYPSIPILE.

O! let theſe tears prevail!
Thou art enough reveng'd for all my ſcorn:
Let this ſuffice, Learchus: will not this
Appeaſe thy dreadful rage? Muſt thou behold me,
A wretched object kneeling at thy feet?
Then ſee me proſtrate thus—— [*kneels.*

LEARCHUS.

My ſoul is fix'd;
Come, or thy father dies.

HYPSIPILE.

HYPSIPILE.

Barbarian! traitor!

[*riſes in a rage.*

Yes, I will come; and Hell with me ſhall bring
Her blackeſt horrors: on the rites abhorr'd
Megæra ſhall attend, with dire Alecto:
But I will prove a fury worſe than all.
Yes, I will come; but it ſhall be to tear
That treach'rous heart from thy deteſted boſom:
Monſter of cruelty, I come!

LEARCHUS.

Then haſte,
Or now he falls beneath my vengeful hand.

[*about to ſtab him.*

HYPSIPILE.

Behold I come——the ſtroke forbear:

[*To* Learchus.

Is there no pity in the ſky!
Still let me thy remembrance ſhare; [*To* Jaſon.
My ſoul diſſolves!——I faint!——I die!
What flinty heart could here refrain
To melt with ſympathy of woe?
What cruel eyes could view my pain,
And yet forbid the tears to flow?

[Hypſipile *weeping, walks ſlowly towards the ſhip, looking back tenderly on* Jaſon.

JASON.

Wilt thou forſake me thus, Hypſipile?
And would'ſt thou, impious ſavage!--I'm diſtracted!
Where ſhall I turn for counſel!—Barb'rous Gods!

SCENE LAST.

JASON, HYPSIPILE, RHODOPE, TOANTES, LEARCHUS, EURYNOME, ARGONAUTS.

EURYNOME.

And have I found thee then at length, my ſon!

LEARCHUS.

Fly mother, ſave thyſelf.

JASON.

Inhuman woman!
'Tis not in vain that fate has ſent thee hither.
[*Stopping her.*
Stay thee, Hypſipile:——look here, thou traitor!
Set free Toantes, or this hand cuts ſhort
Thy mother's life. [*Draws a dagger,* Hypſipile
[*ſtops ſhort as ſhe is about to enter the ſhip.*

LEARCHUS.

 Say'ſt thou!

EURYNOME.

What can this mean!

RHODOPE.

O unexpected change!

LEARCHUS.

Forbear in her
To puniſh my miſdeeds. 'Tis I alone
Am Jaſon's foe.

JASON.

My rage permits not now
A calm reflection: all are Jaſon's foes
That hate not thee: a thouſand cruelties
Pollute her ſoul: but were ſhe innocent,
I ſhould not bluſh to make her now the victim:
'Tis guilt enough to be Learchus' mother.

RHODOPE.

He ſeems confounded.

HYPSIPILE.

Mighty Gods! aſſiſt us!

JASON.

Wretch, art thou yet reſolv'd?

LEARCHUS.

LEARCHUS.

I am reſolv'd;
Her life is yours: but let Hypſipile
Come and fulfill the contract we have made.

RHODOPE.

Inhuman monſter!

HYPSIPILE.

Moſt unnat'ral ſavage!

JASON.

Then thus to you, infernal deities,
I here devote this horrid ſacrifice.

LEARCHUS.

Why do I tremble thus! [*Aſide.*]

JASON.

It reſts on you,
Upon the ſon t'avenge the mother's death;
Die, hapleſs wretch! [*about to ſtab her.*

LEARCHUS.

O hold! forbear to ſtrike,
The victory is thine.

RHODOPE.

RHODOPE.

Nature at length
Has touch'd his harden'd breaſt.

EURYNOME.

My dear Learchus,
To thee I owe my life.

LEARCHUS.

Eurynome,
Thou little know'ſt thy ſon——call not this pity
My virtue, 'tis my ſhame: I would have ſeen
Thy death unmov'd, but reſolution fails me;
Spite of myſelf I tremble, ſhrink with terror,
And feel my blood congeal within my veins.
Why was I not by nature fix'd in goodneſs,
Or more confirm'd a villain? Coward heart!
'Tis thou, and thou alone that haſt undone me;
Then thus with thee begin my juſt revenge.
[*Stabs himſelf.*

EURYNOME.

O ſtay!—What haſt thou done?——

LEARCHUS.

I neither hope,
Nor will accept their pardon; as he liv'd,
So ſhall Learchus die. [*Leaps into the ſea.*

EURYNOME.

I faint!——O Heav'n!

[*Swoons, and is carried off.*

RHODOPE.

This is your work, ye righteous pow'rs!

JASON.

My friends!

Haſte and unbind the king.

[*The Argonauts go to the ſhip.*

HYPSIPILE.

My deareſt lord!

I ſcarcely yet can ſtill my beating heart,

RHODOPE.

What ſtrange events this day has ſeen!

TOANTES.

Ah prince!

[*Coming from the ſhip.*

My daughter!

HYPSIPILE.

Deareſt father!

JASON.

JASON.

O my lord!

HYPSIPILE.

And is it giv'n me once again to kiſs
That honour'd hand?

TOANTES.

And do I once again
Thus claſp thee to my breaſt?

RHODOPE.

Now, faithful lovers,
Propitious Hymen ſoon ſhall recompenſe
Your ſorrows paſt.

TOANTES.

Firſt let us to the temple
To thank the gracious Pow'rs: for, O my children!
How vain is ev'ry human enterprize,
If not begun by duty to the Gods!

CHORUS.

CHORUS.

What frenzy muſt his ſoul poſſeſs,
Whoſe hopes on evil deeds depend!
For though the wicked meet ſucceſs,
Yet peace can ne'er their ſteps attend.
For ev'n in life's ſereneſt ſtate,
Shall Vice receive her ſecret ſting;
As Virtue, tho' depreſt by fate,
Herſelf her own reward ſhall bring.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.